

£2,199 in PRIZES

(See Page 475.)

CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER

PEARSON'S

**TO INTEREST
TO ELEVATE
TO AMUSE.**



WEEKLY

**SPLENDID NEW
CHRISTMAS GAME
GIVEN AWAY INSIDE.**

No. 1012.]

POSTAGE,
ONE PENNY.

REGISTERED FOR
TRANSMISSION TO CANADA.

WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 9, 1909.

ENTERED AT
STATIONERS' HALL.

[PRICE TWOPENCE.]

Park Drive

Cigarettes 10 for 2^d

Fine Virginia. Purity
Guaranteed. The Best
Cigarette Value in the
World. Ask your to-
bacconist to-day for
Park Drive Cigarettes.

GALLAHER Ltd., The Independent Firm, Belfast & London.



GALAXY BARGAIN SALE

CONTAINING

12 Blankets, 21/-

**OFFERED
BELOW
WHOLE-
SALE
PRICES.**



**MONEY
RETURNED
IN FULL
IF NOT
FULLY
SATISFIED**

The lot packed free, and sent on receipt of amount.

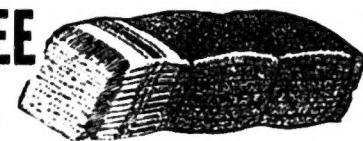
2 Large Coloured Shetland Blankets, very durable quality, soft, warm, and comfortable, full size, 45in. by 65in.

2 Warm Woollen Blankets, soft Twill make, splendid durable quality, size 82in. by 54in., weight 6lbs. Very warm.

2 Cream-Coloured Warm, Fine Quality Crib Blankets, soft as velvet, wash well, and beautiful finish, full size.

2 Yorkshire Combed White Twilled Blankets, thick, warm, soft, and comfortable, well finished and edged, size 51in. by 70in.

FREE



12 White Bedroom Towels given with each Parcel.

All orders executed in rotation as they arrive by post.
Illustrated Bargain Catalogues of Carpets, Hearthrugs, Quilts, Table Linen, Bedsteads, Overmantels, Curtains, &c.
Post Free if, when writing, you mention "Pearson's Weekly," 9, 12, 1909. Address—

F. HODGSON & SONS (Dept. P.W.), Mfrs., Importers, & Merchants **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

Dr. J. Collis Browne's

Chlorodyne

Admitted by the
Profession to be
the Most Valua-
ble Medicine ever
discovered

... The Best Remedy Known for ...

**COUGHS, COLDS,
ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS, NEURALGIA,
TOOTHACHE, GOUT, RHEUMATISM,
and all the Complaints so
prevalent in the Winter Months.**

**In DIARRHŒA and other Complaints
of the Bowels it acts like a Charm.**

Convincing
Medical
Testimony
accompanies
each bottle.

Of all Chemists
at
11/-, 2/6, and 4/6.

When you ask for Chlorodyne see that you get

Dr. J. Collis Browne's

Chlorodyne

The ORIGINAL and ONLY GENUINE.

ABSOLUTELY PURE, THEREFORE BEST

Cadbury's
COCOA
MADE AT
BOURNVILLE
(WORCESTERSHIRE)

Do you like a Cup of Hot Tea or Coffee when you wake?

If so, the way to get it with certainty and with the minimum of trouble, is to fill up a

THERMOS FLASK

at night, then you have it ready in the morning.

THE BEST XMAS PRESENT

In consequence of the enormous sale it has been possible to produce

TWO NEW PATTERNS

at a price within the reach of all, at

10/6 and 15/6

EACH.

Other patterns as before, from 21s. to 10 guineas.

Irvaluable for the Nursery, Invalids, Travellers, Sportsmen, Tourists, Campers, Fishermen, Motorists, and others.

Of all JEWELLERS, CHEMISTS, IRONMONGERS AND STORES. Beware of worthless imitations. Infringers of the "THERMOS" Patent are being prosecuted.

Wholesale only—**A. E. GUTMANN & CO., 8, LONG LANE, LONDON, E.C.**

MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per line of 7 words or part thereof. Every Advertisement must be prepaid. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly," 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. Advertisements must be received by Tuesday morning for the following week's issue.

GIVE THE FISHERMAN A CHANCE!!—Fish, choice quality, cleaned for cooking, 5lbs. for 2s. 6d. carriage paid. Price lists free.—The Fisherman's Syndicate, No. 5 Pontoon, Grimsby.

SCOTCH SHORTBREAD. WHITE'S CELEBRATED SCOTCH SHORTBREAD. Securely packed in boxes: 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6. To any address in Great Britain. Post Free. N.B.—On receipt of P.O. for 5d. we will send one of our cakes (as sample) Post Free. 7 GORDON STREET, GLASGOW.

FREE BOX OF OILS for Heart Complaints (one week's supply). If you have any indications of Heart Trouble, such as Palpitation, Shortness of Breath, Dizziness, Faints, Tobacco Heart or Fainting, allow us to send you a free supply of OILS, together with our illustrated booklet. Send no stamps. Package in plain wrapper.—The Giant Oil Co., Ltd., (Dept. 6 & L.) 5 Bonaville Street, London, E.C.

"CUREXMA" OINTMENT does cure Eczema. Post free, 1/4 and 2/6.—Sherriff, Chemist, Troon, Ayrshire.

1/- WEEKLY.—Supplied direct, everything in Drapery, Blankets, Sheets, Quilts, Boots, Clothing, Overcoats, Costumes, Jackets, Skirts, Furs. Also 10/6 and 21/- mixed Bales. Write for List.—WALLIS & CO., 4 Bow Lane, London, E.C.

ASTROLOGY.—Life, Horoscope, Marriage Partner described, Money Prospects, Future Events, Changes, &c., accurately told. Send birth-date, 1/-, and stamped envelope.—Madame Marion, Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh.

BE YOUR OWN MASTER and start the Remnant Trade. Experience unnecessary. There's money in it. Write now for free guide.—Cochran's Warehouse, 17 Victoria Bridge, Manchester.

VARICOSE.—Every man suffering from Varicose and its accompanying debility and nervous weakness should send for illustrated circular describing its successful treatment and cure by the only rational and painless method. No electricity. Sent sealed, post free, 3/6 stamps.—E. K. Norton, 25 & 27 Chancery Lane, London, W.C.

PHYSICAL CULTURE.—Thorough practical information on physical culture for training and general health is given in "Modern Physical Culture," by C. Lang Neil. All the modern systems are illustrated. It may be had, post free, for 1/2 from A. F. Sowter, Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

TYPEWRITING.—Revoluta, story-written, clerical and others who require their manuscripts typewritten, should send a post-card for terms to Miss Morris, 14 Bridge Road, Ramsgate, Kent. Special reduction for long orders.

FRINGE NETS, fullsize, any colour, 1/1 dozen; hair dye, instantaneous and harmless, 2s all shades; 1/1; real German razors, 1/1; post free.—J. Brodie, 41 Museum Street, London.

WANTED, AGENTS. either men; spare time. Large commission easily earned. No deposit required. Stamp for particulars.—Rileys, 17 Westgate Colonnade, Bradford.

ASTROLOGY.—Events, Changes, Fortunate Days, Business Success, Marriages. Two years' future added. Send birth-date, 1/- P.O.—Prof. Gould, Butleigh, Whitechurch Road, Cardiff.

FREE TO LADIES.—The Iritium Sanitary Towels are a great improvement on the old-fashioned method; they are more absorbent and softer than any other make; antiseptic and odourless. A sample will be sent free to any address on receipt of 2 penny stamps. Price 1/6 and 2/- per doz.—Lady Manager, Iritium Co. (Dept. 25) 145 Stockwell Rd., London, S.W.

BOON TO WEAK MEN.—Nervous and Physical Weakness, Lack of Vigour, Varicose, and Allied Troubles. Treatise with full particulars, including hundreds of testimonials of complete cures, sent sealed, post free, two stamps.—P. J. Murray, 7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

YOU can earn 1/- an hour.—Full particulars of employment, apply K., 59 Aldersgate Street, London.

VARICOSE VEINS, Bad Legs, &c., are completely cured with inexpensive home treatment. It absolutely removes the Pain, Swelling, Tiredness, and Discomfort. Full particulars on receipt of two stamps.—P. W. Roberts, 45 Henley Road, Southsea.

24 CABINET COPIES, 10/6.—Photo & P.O. to Francis & Co., 295 Ludgate Hill, London.

SLIGHT OF HAND TRICKS.—A few simple conjuring tricks are always useful in the after dinner interval. You can learn a number of effective tricks which need little or no apparatus with very little trouble by studying "After-Dinner Sleights and Pocket Tricks," by C. Lang Neil. Send 1/2 to A. F. Sowter, Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

STRENGTH: How Lost; How Regained.—Interesting and instructive remarks to young and middle-aged men on "How to Preserve Strength, Mental Vitality, and Increase Nervous Energy." A book written on Nervous Exhaustion, Loss of Strength, Poverty of Nervous Force and Debility in Men.—Sent sealed on receipt of 4 penny stamps to Charles Gordon, 5 Gordon House Dispensary, Bedford, Yorks.

PENNY BAZAAR NOVELTIES. 2s. 6d. Gross, 2s. Post Free.—Bulmer's, 280 Rumbold Road, London.

MAKE YOUR OWN PASTRY.—Set of genuine trade recipes, mince pies, cakes, biscuits, 7 stamps.—H. Bilsam, 23 Katherley Gardens, East Ham.

PHENACETINE POWDERS, usually sold at two pence each. One dozen for seven penny stamps.—Wilson, Chemist, 125 Battledown Road, Glasgow.

BLUSHING CURED.—Doctor's famous recipe 1/- order. Testimonials.—M. Stevens (Box 2), 71 Back Piccadilly, Manchester.

TO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS.—A capital handbook for the novice and also for the more advanced student in "How to Take and Take Photographs," by Clive Holland. It gives you all the information you require regarding the Dark Room, Camera, Plates and Films, Exposure, Development of Negatives, Printing, Mounting, &c., &c. It may be had, post free, for 1/2 from A. F. Sowter, Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

LADIES should send stamp for sample of dainty new Sanitary Towel and Booklet for the Home and Toilet. Managers, Bilsam's and Drug Stores (only address), 9 Electric Parade, Holford, London.

OLD ARTIFICIAL TEETH BOOBY.—Call or forward by post; full name per return, or order made.—Messrs. Browning, Actual Manufacturers, 26 Oxford St., Opp. Rialto House, London (Established 189 years).

POULTRY KEEPERS.—Those who would like full instructions as to the keeping, breeding, and rearing of poultry for both pleasure and profit may find it in "Poultry Keeping and How to Make it Pay," by F. E. Wilson, which may be had, post free, from A. F. Sowter, Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

1/- MONTHLY wonderfully successful Herbal all Ailment Treatment. Booklet free.—Walker, Herbalist, 21 Pennsylvania, Bristol.

WE DELIVER
our Perfected "CORONAPHON" and SIX SUPERB RECORDS for 2/- and nine monthly payments of 2/-—It is entirely satisfied with the latest perfection of the finest records ever made. Endless refined music and pleasure for your family. Talking owners are for our GRAMOPHONES. Records. Monthly CATALOGUE sent on request. Days App. 3/6. GRAVE SHEFF.

Make your own Cigarette
It is twice as good
40 CIGARETTE PAPER
BEST and PURE
LARGEST SALE IN G. BRIT.

TIRED MEN
When you are tired of taking mysterious pills and weary of reading "Electric Bells" write to me. I will send you a Book which shows how to keep young and old, make quick money and thoroughness of REVOLUTIONARY REMEDY, VARIOUS and DIBILITY, and many more. With STOMACH MEDICINE or ELECTRICITY, dozens of cures. Book sent sealed, post free. Stamp. Mention this Paper.—A. J. LEIGH, 25 Great Russell Street, London, W.C. Over 20 years' successful results.

There is Nothing to Throw Away

in Cocoa—no leaves or dregs or useless sediment. Cocoa is all nourishment—the word itself means "Food of the Gods." It is one of Nature's best gifts to mankind, and every year finds it more and more relied upon by those who study health and diet.

FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED COCOA

is manufactured by the **Oldest House in the Trade**, and is unsurpassed for solubility, fragrance, and flavour.

The Medical Press, including **The Lancet**, **British Medical Journal**, and **Medical Annual**, testifies to its absolute purity.

Fry's **PURE CONCENTRATED Cocoa**

NOTHING TO LEAVE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CUP.

PRECIOUS TO THE LAST DROP.

Hovis



Bread

Is made from the pick of the world's wheatfields.

All Communications respecting Advertisements should be sent to the Advertisement Department, "PEARSON'S WEEKLY" Offices, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

PEARSON'S WEEKLY

XMAS NUMBER

No. 1012.

TRANSMISSION AT
BOOK HAYES.

WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 9, 1909.

ENTERED AT
STATIONERS' HALL.

TWOPENCE.

Christmas Smiles

SKETCHED BY
SOME WELL KNOWN ARTISTS

THE
POSTMAN

"THANK EE, SIR,
MERRY XMAS,
SIR"



THE DUSTMAN'S
JOVIAL SMILE



To My Readers.

'Tis Christmas Eve, my thoughts run swiftly
backwards
Over a gap of twenty crowded years,
And through the mists of time once more a picture
Appears.

I see a little group of eager faces
Alit with pride and undisturbed by doubt,
The opening trials are past, and "Pearson's Weekly"
Is out.

The vision fades, a score of years have flitted,
The new-born paper of my former dream
Now reigns and rules in British hearts and homesteads
Supreme.

And as within my chair I sit and ponder,
With memories of this wondrous past, there blends
The thought of all we owe our myriad readers
And friends.

One simple wish—the best that I can offer
With which to thank you for that friendship dear—
Just this—"A Joyful Christmas and a Happy
New Year."
THE EDITOR.

P.C. X.Y.Z.
FEELS
REALLY
AMIABLE



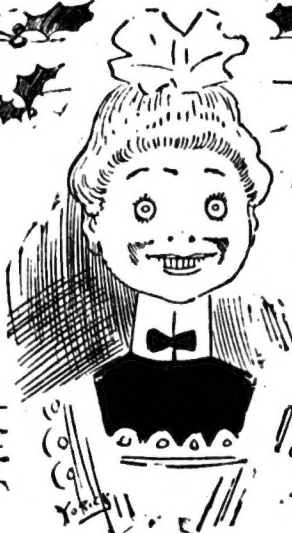
CHORLEY



FATHER'S
HEARTY
HA HA

THE
HOUSEMAID
HAS
VISIONS

THE
OFFICE
BOY
THINKS OF
PLUM
PUDDING



R

The World's Best Stories.

Told Week by Week.

Swimmer and Fighter Too.

MISS AGNES WESTON, in her recent book "My Life Among the Blue-jackets," tells many good stories. One of the best relates to her dog Hector, that was not only a good swimmer, but a great fighter.

"He would swim off to the Cambridge," says Miss Weston, "right across the harbour, for the sole purpose of fighting the commander's dog. Many a fight I believe they had on the quiet among the men."

"One day it occurred on the upper deck. 'What's all that disturbance?' said the captain. 'Please, sir, it's Miss Weston's dog; he's swum all the way from Devonport to fight the commander's dog.'"

"In the interests of fair play the captain allowed the battle to be fought out."

Why Lord Charles Was Slow.

At this juncture, when a fresh honour has been conferred on the First Sea Lord, a rather good story that went round the Mediterranean when he was Commander-in-Chief on the station, is worth retelling. Sir John gave a cup for competition among the crews of the ships in the Fleet, and on the first two occasions the men of his own ship, the *Renown*, were easy victors.

But there came a time when Lord Charles Beresford's ship was victorious, much to the disgust of Admiral Fisher, who did not relish being beaten. Shortly afterwards, during manœuvres, Lord Charles was rather slow in carrying out an evolution, which caused the flagship to signal: "Why were you so slow in carrying out instructions?"

Without a moment's hesitation, the answering signal came: "Because we are towing the Malta Cup."

More Carnegie Stories.

AMONG Mr. Andrew Carnegie's innumerable Scotch stories is one about a caddie of St. Andrews.

This caddie's wife—so Mr. Carnegie's story runs—was much troubled by her husband's loose way of life. He could never have a good day on the links, but he must end it with a wet night at the tavern. So, to cure him, the woman lay in wait on the road one evening, dressed in a white sheet.

When her husband came along, she rose from behind a hedge, an awful white figure with outspread arms.

"Who the de'il are you?" asked the intemperate caddie.

"I'm Auld Nickie," said the figure, in a hollow voice. "Gie's a shake o' yer hand, then," said the tipsy caddie. "I'm married tae a sister o' yours. She'll be waitin' for us up at the hoose, an' nae doot she'll mak' ye welcome. Come on hoame wi' me."

Reformed.

ANOTHER good Carnegie golf story is this:

A certain Scotch laird had led an awful life of it up to a good old age, and then eased up on the bottle a bit and took frantically to golf.

It got mooted about that he had experienced a change of heart.

Somebody meeting the local minister, said: "Is it true that the laird has got religion at last?"

"No," said the minister, "I think not, unless it's in his wife's name."

He Got it.

JUST one more Carnegie story:

The non-magnetic yacht *Carnegie*, about which so much has been said recently, before its departure on a fifteen-year trip to survey the oceans of the world, was visited by Mr. Carnegie. On his tour of inspection, accompanied by Dr. L. A. Bauer, who has charge of the yacht's expedition, Mr. Carnegie expressed great admiration for the appearance of the engine-room. The surface of each small piece of brass or nickel was a mirror; no soiled waste or greasy cloth was anywhere to be seen.

Mr. Carnegie said he would like to congratulate the person who was responsible for the engine-room's appearance. The man was sent for, and listened respectfully to Mr. Carnegie's praise. Then moving out of the room, he halted at the door, and, smiling, asked: "Excuse me, sir, is this 'just honourable mention,' or does it carry a prize?"

It carried a prize.

Killing Two Birds With One Stone.

MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER, the actor, tells a good story. Not long ago a member of his company, who was not Scotch by anything except maybe absorption, went to see his sister off to Scotland.

Later in the day, a newsboy passed with his placard, "Accident to the Scotch express."

"Get a paper and see if your sister is all right," said Mr. Bouchier. The other paused, looked at his watch, and replied:

"I'll just wait until the next edition, and then I'll be able to see the result of the 3.15 race as well."

The Other Way Round.

QUENTIN ROOSEVELT, discussing his father's powers as a hunter, said one afternoon:

"My father is such a good shot that, when he gets back, he'll have a right to talk as one of his old western friends did."

"This grand old western hunter sat by the stove at the trader's one night, when a young man exclaimed: 'Say, tell us about some of the narrow escapes you've had from grizzlies and so on.'"

"'Young feller,' said the old hunter grimly, 'if there's been any narrow escapes, it's the grizzlies as has had 'em, not me!'"

Strategy.

GENERAL SIR CHARLES DOUGLAS is a firm believer in the value of military cyclists, and when he commanded a division at Aldershot he organised some cyclist manœuvres on a rather large scale.

He arrived at one position and found a troop of men calmly sitting beside a bank watching an opposing force of wheelmen rapidly approaching them. He called the attention of the subaltern in command to the fact that he was in danger of being cut off from his main Army, and the reply considerably surprised him.

"Don't you worry, sir! I have peppered that road with sixpennyworth of tin tacks. Wait till they get off to repair their punctures, and see me round the whole of them up in next to no time!"

A Lesson Here.

AN amusing story, albeit one that carries a weighty lesson, was told recently of a well-known City man, who died from overwork.

"He was too absorbed in affairs," the narrator, a broker, said. "He had, one day, an appointment to lunch at two. Two came, and he was so busy he forgot lunch altogether. He worked on till four without intermission."

"At four, quite naturally, he began to have a strange interior sense of emptiness, cramp, and lightness."

"'Dear me,' he said, patting his waistcoat with his palm, 'I wonder what I ate for lunch that disagreed with me!'"

A Letter-Writing Stimulant.

IN the newly-published biography of Sir Wilfrid Lawson there is a crop of good stories. One of them refers to Sir Andrew Clark.

It is said that, when he recommended a patient to drink wine, the latter expressed some surprise, saying he thought Sir Andrew was a temperance doctor, to which Clark replied:

"Oh, wine does sometimes help you to get through work. For instance, I have often twenty letters to answer after dinner, and a pint of champagne is a great help."

"Indeed," said the patient, "does a pint of champagne really help you to answer the twenty letters?"

"No! no!" said Sir Andrew; "but when I've had a pint of champagne, I don't care a rap whether I answer them or not!"

Two Dewey Stories.

HERE is an untold story about Admiral Dewey that can be related even at this day:

Some years ago when the Admiral and General Elwell S. Otis were in command of the Navy and Army, respectively, in the Philippines, there were undefined rumours going the rounds that the relations between the two were considerably strained.

On at least one occasion General Otis felt that his prerogatives were being usurped. In fact, he was so worked up about it that he hastened to the *Olympia*, anchored a mile out in Manila Bay, to settle the matter with the Admiral.

Upon entering Dewey's room the General, in taking his sword off for a rest from its weight, fairly threw it on the table, and began in rather warm words:

"Admiral, I came over to inquire just how far you consider your jurisdiction here extends."

Without a moment's hesitation there shot from the Admiral's lips:

"My jurisdiction here, sir, extends just as far as my guns will carry."

Another story characteristic of Dewey has been told at some of the Washington clubs.

On an occasion of not so very remote a date President Roosevelt sent for the Admiral.

After greeting him cordially, the President said, somewhat sharply:

"Now, Admiral, what about that interview of yours in the *NEWARK NEWS*?"

Dewey fashion, like a shot from a cannon, his hand on the President's shoulder, the Admiral smilingly replied:

"Mr. President, I'm a good deal like you; when I have anything to say, I say it."

President Roosevelt considered it so good a joke on himself that he let it go at that.

Quicklime or Limejuice?

ADDRESSING a gathering of students of hygiene at Clapton, Lady St. Helier, who has a wide personal experience of work among the very poor, mentioned that many years ago she attended a series of lectures on hygiene and health in the household, given by a well-known lady doctor.

After giving instructions as to the baby, and the way it should be washed and fed, the lecturer was asked by a woman, "Do I give the baby a tablespoonful of quicklime or limejuice?"

The Odd Corner

The Editor will give one of the famous P.W. penknives to any reader who sends him a paragraph accepted for this column. If more than one reader sends a paragraph that is used, the penknife will be awarded to the reader whose contribution was received first.

THE MYSTERIOUS POSTCARD.

Dear Sir,—

4 come 6 and wards.

Yours 4d.

Solution below.

HOW MUCH?

A MAN earning 19s. a week goes to receive his wages as usual one Saturday, but his master has no change and gives him a sovereign, telling him to give him the shilling change on the Monday. Going home the man loses the sovereign and borrows a shilling from a friend to pay his master back. How much is he out by the transaction? Solution below.

FAVOURITE AUTHORS.

Of Lawyers—Sue.
Of Thieves—Steele.
Of the Impecunious—Borrow.
Of Bachelors—Chambers.
Of the Young Widow—Newman.
Of the Chiropractist—Foote.
Of the Telegrapher—Cable.
Of the Doctor—Payn and Akenside.
Of the Painter—Black, White, Gray, Green, and other Hughes.
Epicures go in for Crabbe and Hare.
The Avaricious want More.
Cricket players like Fielding.
The Author wants his Wordsworth.
The Fisherman takes to Hook and Hake.

MORE SNOWBALLS.

(HERE are some bright and breezy tragedies in verse which a gentle reader has forwarded. More are welcome.)

A chimpanzee inquired, "Say owl,
What's doing up your tree?"
"Climb up," replied the surly owl,
"You chimpanzee, an' see."

An old gorilla found one day
A packet of vanilla,
The toothsome meal, I grieve to say,
Made the gorilla iller.

"Oh, jaguar," said the porcupine,
"My nerves are all ajar,
Pray tell me why, for very wise,
Oh, jaguar, you are?"

"My friend," replied the jaguar,
"Too frugally you dine,
And that is why, I plainly see,
My porcupine, you pine."

An antelope to marry once
Was filled with every hope,
But not a single "dear" would with
The antelope elope.

A man whose features were his pride
Brought to his niece a monkey;
But when she saw them side by side
She called the monkey "Unkey."

Rhinocetus jabutus once—
(That's Latin for the Kagu)—
Got into English weather, and
It gave the Kagu ague.

A Terrapin had torn his shell,
Which let the water in—
And so a brother tortoise lent
The Terrapin a pin.

If Cook had left his ghost up North
To greet Commander Peary,
The meeting in that lone place would
Have been to Peary, eerie.

Our tortoise "Lightning" was our pet
Which father one day bought us,
And ever since at feeding time
Our little tortoise sought us.

('Twas not the only pet we had
We kept them as a habit),
The tortoise ate his food and would
Not give our rabbit a bit.

SOLUTIONS.

THE MYSTERIOUS POSTCARD.

Dear Bob,—Come between four and six and stop afterwards.—Yours, Brown.

HOW MUCH?

Of course the man only lost £1.

£2,199

Now Distributed in Picture Couplets.

£24 19s. 6d. Each for Ten Winners this Week.

IF YOU WANT A COUPLETS CHEQUE AT CHRISTMAS ENTER NOW.

THIS IS THE IDEA:

In the second column is a picture together with the first line of a Couplet. You are invited to complete the Couplet by supplying another line, the last word of which shall rhyme with the last word of the line given. We have given you an alternative second line just to show you how easy it is. Now compose an original second line and send it to us under the conditions below.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST.

In the next column you will find the first line of a Picture Couplet together with a picture. What you have to do is to make a couplet by adding another line, the last word of which must rhyme with the last word of the line given.

When you have written your couplet on the entry form, fill in your name and address in the space provided, cut out the entry form, attach to it a postal order for sixpence, and place it in an envelope addressed to the Editor, *Pearson's Weekly*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

This being a Double Number.

We give two entry forms. You may use both. A postal order for sixpence must, however, accompany each.

Mark your envelope "WAIT" in the top left-hand corner. All attempts must arrive on or before Thursday, December 9th. Those arriving later will be disqualified.

Everyone who enters must compete on the printed entry form, and send a postal order for 6d. with it. The P.O. must be made payable to C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., and should be crossed "& Co." The number must be written in the space provided on the entry form. Where one P.O. of higher value is sent to cover more than one attempt, the number of this P.O. should be written on each entry form.

All attempts must be forwarded on the printed entry forms or they will be disqualified.

Of the amount received (after deducting ten per cent.) three-fourths will be divided amongst the senders of the ten lines which are considered to be the best by the adjudicators, by whom originality of idea will be taken into consideration. If there are more senders than one of a line thus selected by the adjudicators, a tenth part of this three-fourths will be divided amongst all such senders.

The remaining one-fourth will be awarded in gifts by the adjudicators amongst those competitors whose efforts show merit.

The Editor will accept no responsibility in regard to the loss or non-delivery of any attempt submitted.

No correspondence will be entered into in connection with the competition, and telegrams will be ignored.



When Brown tried to shine as a Christmas Eve wait

Example of a second line—not to be used:

The performance he gave was considered third-rate.

ENTRY FORM.

PICTURE COUPLETS No. 13.

No. of Postal Order

When Brown tried to shine as a Christmas Eve wait

I agree to abide by the decision published in "*Pearson's Weekly*" and to accept it as final, and I enter only on this understanding, and I agree to abide by the printed conditions.

Signed

Address

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Signed

Address

THREE POINTS TO NOTE.

1. Each week's contest is complete in itself.
2. Each entry received is most carefully scrutinised and considered entirely on its merits. The Judges pay no attention to the names and addresses of competitors.
3. Our Contests are conducted on straightforward lines only. No special favour is shown to any particular competitor or to any particular town or district.

RESULT OF COUPLETS NO. 10.

This week's awards in Picture Couplets are easily the biggest in this series of competitions. The amount available for distribution is £333 2s.

Of this week's sum £249 15s. is divided by the senders of the ten lines selected as the best by the adjudicators, so that to each winning line £24 19s. 6d. is awarded. The remainder, £83 7s., is distributed amongst other competitors whose efforts show merit.

May we draw your attention to the New Contest below, the awards in which will be announced during Christmas week.

(List of awards appears on Page 504 and Page iii. of Red Cover.)



By ELLALINE TERRISS,
The Talented and Charming Actress.

In these highly practical days people are apt to find fault with anything that does not appear at first sight to be of some obvious assistance to them in getting their bread and butter, and for this reason there are some who say that children ought not to be told fairy tales.

They say that such stories make the youngsters dreamy and impracticable, and generally unfit to face the hard facts of life with which they will sooner or later be called upon to grapple. According to such people, everything that is told a child must be strictly true, and by this means our kiddies will grow up into successful men and women.

They Appeal to the Imagination.

But there is another side to this question which is overlooked by the matter-of-fact people who cannot recognise that imagination has its real uses in life which must not be ignored if our children are to be happy—and happiness is an essential part of real success. All children possess a certain amount of imagination, and this should be encouraged, within reasonable limits, by their elders, because many valuable lessons may be taught by its aid.

Fairy stories appeal directly to the childish imagination; they are, so to speak, the sugar-coating which makes these useful lessons more acceptable and more easily learnt by the little ones.

Tales of the knight who rides forth in armour and does noble deeds, rescuing distressed damsels from cruel giants or wicked witches, and beating down the powers of evil, fire a boy's imagination with chivalrous thoughts, and plant the lesson more firmly in his mind than it would be possible to do by merely lecturing him on the subject in a dry, matter-of-fact way.

Gripped by the Love of Right.

On the other hand, the little girl who has listened with breathless interest to an account of the sufferings and adventures of a heroine who preferred suffering to wrongdoing, will make up her mind to imitate the girl in the story. The love of right has gripped her imagination, it has been vividly brought home to her childish mind, and will not be easily dislodged.

From this point of view the value of fairy stories is, in my opinion, greatly increased if they are told by mother or nurse rather than read from a book. Stories can in this way be adapted to suit the particular character of the little listener, while the mother who tells those fascinating tales will, when speaking on other subjects, command greater respect and attention than the mother who has always framed her lessons upon strictly matter-of-fact lines.

As regards the charm of children, I think that most people will agree with me when I say that the child who believes in fairies is infinitely more delightful than the

up-to-date babe who has been taught that they are "a nonsense." The latter may grow up into a thoroughly practical human being, and may even attain to a certain amount of worldly success. But what a lot of pleasure is denied to such an individual!

What May Happen.

Life is not made up entirely of hard facts and rows of figures, although, without the cultivation of imagination, one may easily drop into that way of looking at things. You remember how the poet has described such a man; it hits him off exactly:—

*The primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more!*

And there are many people like that who see no inner meaning in beauty, who, in fact, "don't believe in fairies"! Cultivate your children's imagination to a reasonable extent by fairy stories, and they will discover that it is of real practical value to them in after life. The matter-of-fact man has nothing to fall back upon when things are going against him. His stunted imagination will not allow him to believe that the luck may turn, and to give his thoughts a brighter turn by building up but one castle in the air would be dead against his principles—yes, and beyond his powers.

These are some of the reasons why I decidedly think that children ought to hear fairy tales.

Ellaline Terriss

An article on "The Ghosts of Haunted Waters"—strange old legends of ghost ridden rivers and lakes—appears in the Double Xmas Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE—splendidly illustrated with coloured pictures.

COMPLETE SHORT STORY.

A Mesmeric Pass

The Delightful Story
of a Would-be
Hypnotist.By
A. ST. JOHN
ADCOCK.

MR. JAMES MORBY was a fussy little plump man, who was always looking for trouble, and generally finding it. When his old aunt broke herself of a confirmed habit of living and left him an annuity of three hundred, he decided to give up travelling (he had been in the commercial line), settled down at Streatham, and started gardening.

That was all right, but he got tired of it and went on to sample other pastimes that were not so safe—chemistry, till it set him afire and laid him up in bandages; fretwork; modelling in clay; Sandow exercises; vegetarianism; collecting picture postcards; and then, having seen how it was done at a Christmas party, mesmerism.

He studied books about it, went to lectures and entertainments, where people were hypnotised, and the more he saw it done the more he was satisfied that he could do it. He began in a homely way, but his wife was a difficult subject; she used to interrupt him to say that so far as she could make out he was trying to perform the deaf-and-dumb alphabet, and if only he knew how silly he looked, waving his arms about, he would never do it again.

The jobbing gardener was no better; he was willing to oblige for an extra glass of beer, but he was one of those men who seem to go about in a state of trance all the time; it was his natural condition, and you couldn't put him further into it or wake him out of it.

His first success was with the policeman, who came in when the sergeant wasn't about. He sat down and took to Mr. Morby's passes immediately; he stared straight in front of him, growing woodener every moment, until Mr. Morby recognised that, according to the handbooks, the time had come to exclaim in loud, firm terms:

"Stand up! You hear me? You are not a policeman now. You are —. Jane!" his voice shook with excitement. "What should he be, Jane?"

"A cow!" suggested his wife.

"You are a cow!" announced Mr. Morby.

Even a real cow couldn't have moved better than the policeman did, and the way he browsed on the carpet was so natural that if he had suddenly sprouted a tail and flicked a fly off his nose, you would scarcely have been surprised.

He blinked and confusedly accepted a half-crown when Mr. Morby woke him up, but declared that he had no recollection of doing anything of the kind, which, Mr. Morby proudly assured him, was exactly as it ought to be.

After that Mr. Morby had the policeman in pretty frequently and was invariably so successful that, although it was interesting, it began to be rather tame; but when he discontinued inviting him, the policeman would come and knock softly and inquire whether he would like to do a bit of mesmerism this evening, and Mr. Morby resented this.

The policeman was, however, persistent; he said two shillings would be enough for him, and that suggestion being ineffective he subsequently reduced his tariff.

At different times Mr. Morby practised on the tax-collector and on his landlord, but they were suspicious men and wouldn't go off. He persevered and did his best with a number of persons, but had no more luck worth mentioning till a shabby sort of fellow, who had seen better days, called, selling stationery and cheap music. Mr. Morby caught sight of him from the window and went to the door and chatted with him.

The man wanted money, and didn't care what he did or what was done to him so long as he got it. He warned Mr. Morby fairly that he didn't expect he should go off.

Mr. Morby gave him to understand that his will was uncommonly strong; he placed a metal disc in the man's palm, commanded him to concentrate his mind on that, and promptly weighed in with the necessary passes, then began to repeat in a fierce, peremptory voice:

"You are not a pedlar, I suggest to you that you never have sold music and stationery! You are enormously rich. I suggest to you that you are a millionaire. You have a big estate in the country. Your pockets are full of money. You are wearing a diamond ring and a gold watch and chain. Remember! You are a millionaire! Now then! Count your money, sir; admire your diamond ring; tell me the time by your watch."

But the disc merely slid out of the man's hand, and he snored.

"That's the hypnotic sleep," said Mr. Morby proudly to his wife. "I've put him into that."

"Mind! He'll tumble off," ejaculated Mrs. Morby uneasily. "Is he all right?"

Mr. Morby pushed the man back in the arm-chair and shook him.

"Quite all right," he said testily. "Wake up, sir. You hear me? You are awake!"

But he wasn't. He continued to snore, and Mr. Morby had a spasm of alarm.

"Suppose he was to die in it?" faltered Mrs. Morby.

"He won't. How can he?" said Mr. Morby desperately. "I was just getting a grip of him then if you hadn't interfered and put me out. You go to bed, Jane."

Mrs. Morby wouldn't go at first. She lingered and helped to transfer the man to the couch; then, as Mr. Morby was imperative, she let him have his own way and went.

In spite of all his bluster, Mr. Morby was really getting frightened. He saw himself shutting up the house and flying to America under a false name.

Torn with anxieties, he continued making his passes so resolutely that he must have sent himself to sleep, and didn't know it till he woke stiff and wretched and was shocked, at first glance, with a fear that the man was dead, he lay so dreadfully tranquil. Directly Mr. Morby touched him, however, he woke, yawned, and gazed around bewildered.

"Hallo! Here we are! How are you?" Mr. Morby laughed and babbled, overjoyed. "Pretty long nap you've had, eh? I sent you off easy. How do you feel? Peckish?"

"Where am I?" The man sat up and stared blankly. "Who are you?"

"Eh? Oh, you called at our door yesterday," cried Mr. Morby with more cheerfulness than he felt, "with your stationery and music, you know?"

The man shook his head and frowned.

"I can't remember—What's my name?"

Mr. Morby gasped and sat down.

"Where do I come from?" the man demanded darkly.

"How should I know? You're a stranger to me," said Mr. Morby, pulling himself together. "Try to think. You called here selling things."

"Selling things? Don't you tell me that!" the man struck in sharply. "Why, I'm rich—I'm a millionaire—I know that much, anyway, and"—he lifted his hand and scrutinised it, and was startled. "Where's my diamond ring? And," glancing at his waistcoat and speaking more indignantly, "who's taken my gold watch and chain?"

With that, he stood up and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, was violently agitated.

"I had plenty—pockets full of it—and—Look at this!" He produced twopenny.

"Robbed! Fetch the police! Where am I? Who are you? These can't be my clothes. I'm a millionaire, but—Oh, dear, my memory's gone! Somebody's robbed me."

He was almost in tears, and Mr. Morby couldn't pacify him.

"Be calm," he adjured him. "It'll all come back to you—your memory will, I mean."

He explained in detail how everything had occurred, but the stranger was still sceptical.

"Don't recollect a word of it," he said stubbornly. "Don't talk to me about the force of suggestion. You couldn't mesmerise me. Nobody could."

He wouldn't allow Mr. Morby to repeat the facts any more; he said he shouldn't feel safe until the police were sent for, and it was only after Mrs. Morby had appeared and corroborated her husband's story that he was persuaded to do nothing till he had made a good breakfast. Mr. Morby thought that food and hot coffee might help to restore his mental balance.

He stayed with the Morbys for over a fortnight and there was no perceptible change in

his deplorable condition. There was nothing wrong with his appetite; he smoked and drank heartily enough, and left off worrying and became gently resigned, as if he didn't care even if he had to settle down with them for the rest of his days.

But they were not so fond of him as all that. They kept his bag in a prominent place in the drawing-room, hoping the sight of it might some day touch a chord in him and do him good, but it never did, and Mr. Morby was feeling that he really couldn't stand any more of it, when, by the merest chance, he lost him.

They had gone shopping together. He had rigged the man out in a decent suit of his own, and lent him a new hat and some boots, and they had been to buy tobacco; then Mr. Morby dropped in at the butcher's to complain about the last leg of mutton. Coming out

again, and seeing the man a few doors away, up the street, absorbed in a photographer's window, he hesitated, made up his mind, and moved off in the opposite direction, and reached home so out of breath that he could only tell his wife about it in dumb show.

Well, the day dragged slowly by, and the man did not return. His state of mind being what it was, he would probably forget them, they thought, and go and make a nuisance of himself to somebody else. They sat up for him until past midnight, and were just falling asleep, and thinking that life was worth living again, when there was a knock at the front door.

He had not only come back, but he had brought a stranger with him; and Mr. Morby conducted them into the parlour and stood shivering in his dressing-gown, unable to think of anything appropriate to say; so the stranger spoke first.

"I am Dr. Huckle. You may have heard of me. I am the well-known Psychic Healer. I met this gentleman astray in Camberwell Road, and was attracted by something in his appearance. I perceived that he was in a semi-hypnotic condition, and stopped him; he wanted a police-station, and said he had been robbed, so I felt it my duty to investigate."

"In order to waste no time, I hypnotised him instantly—he is a ready subject—and ordered him to lead me to the house he had come from, and I de-mesmerised him whilst we were waiting for you to answer our knock. I am afraid we disturbed you." He broke off, and glanced doubtfully at his companion, and then, with a meaning smile, at Mr. Morby. "If our unfortunate friend here has no objection, I should like to speak to you privately."

He turned again to his companion, executed several masterful passes, and cried with brutal imperiousness: "Sit down, sir! You are asleep."

"What for?" protested the other, weakly indignant.

"Sit down! You are asleep!" reiterated the Doctor, remarking his passes in a burst of indignation. "Now, sir," he said, with a curious wink, as the other sank limply into a chair and lapsed into slumber. "We are men of the world. Give me the facts, please."

When Mr. Morby did so he was evidently disappointed.

"Not a millionaire," he snapped, "and has no money?"

"I believe he has twopenny," said Mr. Morby wearily.

"Dear me. Very serious!" observed the Doctor. "That's the folly of this amateur mesmerism. It's extremely dangerous—meddling with these marvellous forces of Nature."

"And yet," continued the Doctor, eyeing the patient critically, "I, myself, have made a life study of mesmerism. As a professional Hypnotic Healer I have had astonishing successes in treating nervous affections. I should like you to go over my establishment at Kentish Town. It would interest you. I have six patients living now under my roof, and I give three of them hypnotic trances one hour after meals three times daily. It is doing them a world of good, and I never have any such trouble as this with them."

"Perhaps you could advise me what to do?" ventured Mr. Morby.

"Not off-hand," said Dr. Huckle sombrely. "A false step now might be fatal."

He discoursed learnedly on the phenomenon, and presently Mr. Morby made a further appeal, and wondered if arrangements could not be concluded for the man to undergo a course of treatment in his establishment.

"Don't care to be mixed up with such a nasty job," he said frankly. "If, as a consequence of your blundering, he died on my hands, it would ruin my business. Besides, mine is not a charitable institution. It did just cross my mind when I fancied he was a millionaire that I might admit him at a price, but—Too risky!"

By degrees, however, Mr. Morby overcame his objections, and eventually he undertook to find room for the man in his establishment and to cure him, if possible, Mr. Morby being personally responsible in the sum of four guineas a week, payable in advance; and seeing them off in a cab next morning he gratefully shook hands with the Doctor and wished him success.

During the next three weeks he had reports saying that the man maintained his health, but showed no signs of improvement; so Mr. Morby wrote and hinted that, although he would sooner not see the patient any more, he would probably have to pay a visit to the institution and fetch him, as he could not afford to keep him there longer.

Three days later the Doctor arrived at Streatham, very much upset.

"I have bad news for you, sir," he said; "shocking news."

Mr. Morby swallowed a lump in his throat, and gasped.

"He hasn't run away?"

"Worse, sir. Your poor friend is dead. You instructed me to use every effort," continued the Doctor grimly, "and I threw him into a four-hundred volt cataleptic trance, and then couldn't get him out of it. He slept for two days, and this morning I found him—"

He groaned, and Mr. Morby stared at him in awful silence.

"I came to tell you in private. I can do no more. I wash my hands of it, I am sending the body back to you this afternoon, and you must deal with it," said the Doctor.

Naturally, Mr. Morby would sooner not have had the body, but Dr. Huckle was firm, and even disposed to be nasty about it, and it took Mr. Morby nearly an hour of tearful pleading to melt him to compassion; he made it clear to the Doctor that he was more than willing to discharge the funeral expenses, and pay whatever might be required to secure a medical certificate and enable the burial to be accomplished without creating any sensation, and at length he yielded, but said he had never done such a thing before, but he believed Mr. Morby was an honest man and he was sorry for him.

"If this cheque is not sufficient," he said, as he shook hands, "I will let you know."

Nothing was in the papers next morning, but as Mr. Morby was pottering about in the garden two days afterwards, a man appeared coming round the path to him. Something in this man's general aspect fascinated him, and caused him to think of ghosts, and as soon as he was near enough to Mr. Morby he spoke.

"Why—I understood you were dead!" Mr. Morby stammered.

"No fault of yours and your doctor's if I ain't!" said the man. "I've starved—"

"I gave him money for your keep," cried Mr. Morby apologetically.

"Then he kept it—that's all," said the man. "I've had a horrible time. Mesmerised till I'm cross-eyed and knock-kneed. This morning I woke, and remembered everything, in a flash. He'd got me laid out and meant to bury me, but I nipped out of the window."

It turned out, after a good deal of talk, that the man wanted some compensation for all he'd gone through, and they argued the point pretty hotly, but Mr. Morby could not disguise from himself that he had done the man a lot of injury, even though he was all right at last.

Consequently, he compromised, and the man departed not a bit thankful for what he had received, and saying that he hoped next time he called he would be treated more generously.

Mrs. Morby, hearing of this, and that there was every possibility that the man would be calling upon them at intervals for ever more, saw that it was time she took a hand in the business herself. She journeyed to Kentish Town and discovered that where Dr. Huckle's institute should have been there was nothing but a small-newspaper shop. She ascertained that the Doctor had letters addressed to him there, and when she described the other man, the newsagent knew him also; he had seen him and the Doctor about the neighbourhood together lately and reckoned, if you were to ask him, that they were a rummy pair and equal to anything; he hadn't set eyes on them for the last few days, and wouldn't break his heart if he never saw any more of them. That was how Mr. Morby felt, too.

"It'll be a lesson to me, Jane," he said, much subdued. "Thank goodness, it's done with, and I shall try to forget all about it." But Mrs. Morby won't let him,

Our Amateur Theatricals

A Rollicking Tale of a
Christmas Family Gather-
ing.
By ANDREW PATERSON.

EACH Christmas Day at granddad's house
In good old style we meet;
And parents, cousins, uncles, aunts
With joy each other greet.
With games and now and then a dance
We pass the time away;
But last year, more ambitious grown,
We tried a Christmas play.

Our drama was a one-act farce,

'Twas called *The Land-
lord's Doom*;
And for a theatre we had
Our granddad's drawing-
room.
And there our relatives all
sat,
So critical, but kind,
For they had promised to
our faults
To be a little blind.



Our relatives—so critical, but
kind.

But soon disaster marred
our play,

The curtain half way stuck;
When Dicky tried to nail it straight,
His thumb, alas! he struck.
Then all our aunts they loudly talked,
With countenance severe;
They did not wish the little ones
Poor Dick's remarks to hear.

At last our drama was begun,
Soon everyone applauded;
For Eustace played his part so well,
His acting each one lauded.
But, reckless grown, he thoughtless trod
On Flossie's dress, and tore

The silken flounces from her
skirt,
I'm sure a yard or more.



Dicky hit his thumb.

Vexation nearly broke her heart,
She almost wept with rage,
And then, forgetful of her
part,
She ran right off the
stage.

But Flossie's wrath we soon
appeased,

The play again was started,
And Lawrence, who's our "funny man,"
The audience made light-hearted.

Now in our play the "funny man"
Upsets the "landlord" grim,
Who next with temper violent
Proceeds to punish him.
So Stanley, as the "landlord,"
shook

Poor Lawrence like a rat;
But not content with this he
kicked
His foot right through his
hat.

The audience shrieked with
laughter, but
Poor Stanley gave a groan;
For, picking up the damaged
hat,

He found it was his own;
For Lawrence of opinion was,
No actor, great or small,
Should wear a hard hat, so he sneaked
Stan's soft one from
the hall.



Kicked his foot right through
his hat.

With many a cunning twist;
Excitement reigned till Reginald
Hit Dicky on the wrist.

With pain Dick howled and shook his hand,
And raging stamped
about;

"You cad!" he wept; "you
tried that bit,
Take that you beastly
lout!"

Then rushing savagely at
Reg,
He struck with all his
might;

Poor Reg, dismayed by this
attack,
Stepped backward in his
fright.



He trod on Flossie's dress,

In spite of these mishaps
we reached
The tit-bit of the
night

When Reginald and Dick
were due
With wooden swords to
fight.

They thrust, they parried,
feinted, lunged



Excitement reigned till
Reginald hit Dicky on the
wrist.

Now Maud as "Maid" was coming on,
Against her Reggy crashed,
A tray she held fell from her hand,
And every dish was smashed.

At this disaster granddad
looked

The picture of
dismay;
And someone cried,
"Before we're
killed,
'Twere wise to stop the
play."



Reggy crashed against Maud.

But Lawrence—he's our
"funny man"—

Pooh-poohed our faces
long,

And said, to cheer our spirits up,
He'd sing a comic song.

So on the stage he tripped again,
Shrieking a loud "Ha, ha!"

This is the chorus of his
song,
It shocked poor grandmamma:



"We are the rowdy-dowdy boys,
Ta-ra-ra!
We are the rowdy-dowdy boys,
Ta-ra-ra!
When we are on the spree,
I think you will agree,
We are the rowdy-dowdy boys,
Ta-ra-ra!"

The chorus shocked
poor grandmamma.

With silence cold this song we
heard,

And many a frowning glance;
But, heedless of our warning looks,
He next began to dance.

And such a dance! Who would have thought
He was so light and airy?

He pirouetted on his toes
And skipped just like a
fairy.

Until one last great leap he
took,
And then, as each one
feared,

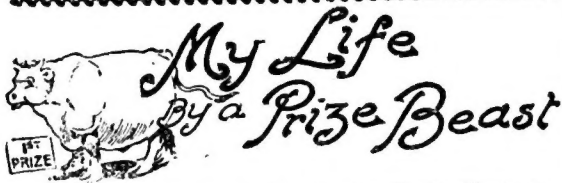
With crash! the fragile stage gave
way,
And Lawrence disappeared.

Then as he from the debris
crept

We heard old granddad say,
"No, no, I never shall allow
Another Christmas play!"



Lawrence disappeared.



An Article in View of the Coming Cattle Show at
the Agricultural Hall, Islington.

THE show is all very well, but what I complain of is
the way in which all these people insist upon twisting
my tail. Surely they can see me just as well while I am
lying down as when I am standing up, and yet they won't
give me a minute's peace.

They are always at me to make me get on my legs. I
only wish some of them were as fat as I. They would
realise then what a piece of work it is to raise my weight
a dozen times in an hour. 'Pon my word, I shall get
quite thin if this goes on much longer.

Cousins in Canada.

What do I weigh? Oh, a trifle over fifteen hundred-
weight. If you want to be exact—1,710 pounds. That is
nearly double what I should have weighed if I had been
brought up like common, underbred cattle who are forced
to graze out in all weathers, and have nothing better
than a common open shed to sleep in.

I am a redpoll, and you can see my pedigree in the
Stud-book. It goes back for many generations, and my
relations are now spread almost all over the world.

You will find cousins of mine in Canada, in the Argentine,
and in Australia. We fetch big prices, too. I understand
that one of my half-brothers was sold the other day for
over six hundred pounds.

Worth something myself? Well, I should rather
think I am. If you consider nothing but the cost of my
feeding and training, you will find that I am at least six
times as valuable, weight for weight, as the ordinary fat
beast.

From my calfhood I was always well looked after and
fed upon the best, but my real training and dieting for
this great show at the Agricultural Hall did not begin
until I was nearly two years old.

Then I was no longer allowed to graze out even during
the day, but was brought in and housed in a most com-
fortable stall, which was bedded down with fresh straw
daily. Exactly as it would have been for a racehorse.

My rations were cake and corn. No, not the sort of
thing you call cake. Oil-cake made from linseed or cotton
seed. Ten pounds a day of cake and corn is my regular
allowance, and plenty of fresh roots as well. Turnips
and swedes mainly, but in summer I sometimes get fresh
carrots.

Hay, of course. My rack is always full of hay, and I
suppose that I am munching it almost all day long. The
fact is it becomes a sort of habit. Occasionally my
master gives me a tonic to improve my appetite, and also
to keep my coat in good condition. You may take it
that my food alone costs over a shilling a day, and that
in the past two years I have eaten nearly forty pounds'
worth of hay, cake, grain, and roots.

Exercise? Yes, I have always had a constitutional
twice a day. My attendant puts a halter on and walks
me up and down the road for half-an-hour or so.

Groomed with a Dandy Brush.

I used to enjoy these little outings, but of late, since
I have put on so much flesh, I find them somewhat trying,
and my pace is not what it once was. About a mile an
hour is my outside limit at present. Still, I know that
the exercise is good for my feet, and so I always do my
best to meet my master's wishes.

I should never have taken the prizes which I have won
unless my coat had been what you see it is. Its perfection
I owe to the care that my attendant has taken with it.
He groomed me every day with a dandy brush, and twice
a week washed me all over with soft soap.

And now, you see, I am the proud possessor of the
challenge cup, and on the sideboard at home my master
keeps half-a-dozen other cups which I have won at various
shows. I trust that I shall be the means of winning him
many others.

"Alas, poor beast!" thought the interviewer as he made
his adieu and left the hall. "You little know that you are
fated to win no more prizes. Already you are sold to a
butcher, and in a few weeks' time your splendid carcass
will be hung up as an advertisement outside the shop of
your purchaser."

CONVICT: "Yes, lady, I always made it a point never
to rob a house on Christmas Eve."

Philanthropist: "That fact does you credit."

Convict: "Thanks, lady! Yer see, it's always best ter
wait till Christmas night. By that time they've got the
presents all unpacked an' lyin' about loose, so yer can
take 'em up better."

HALF THE TRUTH.

"GENTLEMEN, I can't lie about the horse; he is blind
in one eye," said the auctioneer.

The horse was soon knocked down to a spectator,
who had been greatly struck by the auctioneer's honesty.
After paying for the horse, he said: "You were honest
enough to tell me that this animal was blind in one eye.
Is there any other defect?"

"Yes, sir, there is. He is also blind in the other eye!"

NO TANGLING.

WALTER was an important witness, and one of the
lawyers, after cross-examining him severely, said:

"Your father has been talking to you and telling you
how to testify, has he?"

"Yes," said the boy.

"Now," said the lawyer, "just tell us how your father
told you to testify."

"Well," said the boy modestly, "father told me that
the lawyers would try and tangle me, but if I would just
be careful and tell the truth I could tell the same thing
every time."

The lawyer didn't try to tangle that boy any more.

A NEW SENSATION.

It was the old story of the poverty-stricken lover
and the rich heiress. He was proud and reserved, and
although he kept his feelings well under control, she knew
he worshipped the ground she trod on. She liked him as a
friend, but beyond that he realised that his case was
hopeless. But one evening as they sat together, he was a
little more tender than usual. Carried away by his
feelings, he turned to her, and said: "You are very rich."

"Yes," she answered. "I am worth three hundred
thousand pounds."

"And I am very poor."

"Yes, I have heard so," she replied.

"Oh, if you would only take compassion on me, and
love me just a little!" he pleaded. "I can offer you
nothing but a heart that yearns for you. Such love is
everything."

"I'm very sorry to disappoint you," she murmured.
"You do me a great honour; but I cannot be your wife."

"Ah, cruel fate!" he cried. "But I knew what your
answer would be."

"Then why did you propose?"

"Oh, merely to feel what it was like to lose three
hundred thousand pounds."

Just to remind you! Take a copy of the Double Christmas PEARSON'S MAGAZINE home for week-end reading.
No finer Christmas number has ever been published. Selling everywhere—1s.

OUR COURTS

One Way of Finding Out.

Mr. Justice Ridley at the Manchester Assizes remarked: "When a man thrice repeats that he is 'as innocent as the child unborn' you may be pretty sure he is guilty."

Hints to Girls.

"Never, in future, take young men for granted," was Mr. Plowden's advice at Marylebone to a young barmaid who had "married" a clerk (at present undergoing sentence for fraud), believing him to be a single man.

She took it for granted, she said, he was single because he made love to her.

A "Traveller."

At the Bethnal Green Court a witness said that the deceased man was a woodcarver in the winter and a traveller in bananas in the summer.

The Coroner: "Where did he travel?"
Witness: "He had a barrow in the City." (Loud laughter.)

Little Incidents Recorded from the Daily Papers that have Caused the Courts to Smile.

A "Skilled Workman."

Applicant, at Old-street: "My husband is a 'handy man.'"
Mr. Biron: "A 'handy man'? I suppose that means he can work, but prefers to do nothing."
Applicant: "Yes."

His Busy Season.

"Our busy season is just commencing," remarked the driver of an undertaker's hearse at Willesden, when making an application to be allowed time in which to pay arrears of maintenance to his wife.

Smokes that Make the Gentleman.

A creditor, asked, at Westminster, what he knew about the defendant, replied: "I only know he is a gentleman. He smokes sixpenny cigars and the best cigarettes." (Laughter.)
The Judge: "Is that all?"
Creditor: "And he had goods from me and does not pay me." (Laughter.)

Distinction Without a Difference.

A constable at Willesden told the magistrate that a prisoner was not drunk, but merely under the influence of drink.

Never Let it be Said.

A defendant at Bloomsbury pleaded to his Honour Judge Bacon to adjourn the case for a month.
Judge Bacon: "Then you will go away and say the judge is a good, easy chap, and easily imposed upon."
The debtor solemnly assured the judge that he would not, and his Honour agreed to the request.

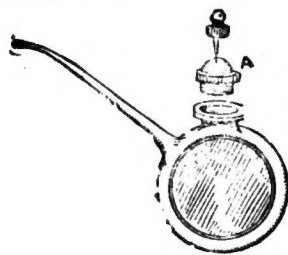
Nothing Like the Old Place.

A grey-haired black man from Barbadoes appeared before Mr. Plowden, at Marylebone, charged with begging.
Mr. Plowden: "Why didn't you stay in Barbadoes?"
The Prisoner: "Well, massa, I was young and couldn't keep one place. But I'd like to go back."
Mr. Plowden: "And get a bit of sunshine?"
Prisoner: "Ah! my word."
Mr. Plowden promised to try and get him back, and reminded him of the bananas and the mangoes.
"Oh! it's good to eat, and no two words about it," said the old man.

PICTURE PARS.

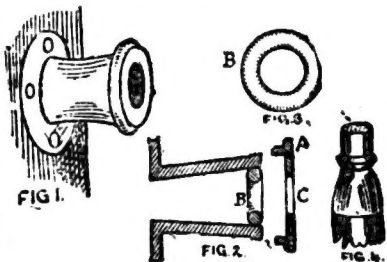
A HANDY PINCUSHION FOR CYCLISTS.

EVERYONE knows how easy it is to lay down a small article when at work and not be able to find it again. This misfortune frequently happens to cyclists when they are oiling. The spout-pin is laid down for a few minutes, but when required it has vanished into thin air. Our picture shows an oilcan, the screw stopper on top of which is fitted with a cork pincushion A. When the spout-pin is taken from the spout it is stuck into this, and there is every probability of its being found when wanted. This little invention will save many a "pin prick" in one sense, although it encourages them in another.



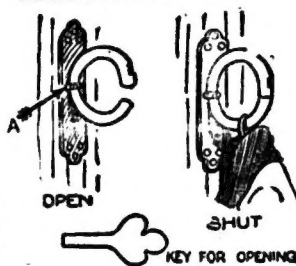
HOW CAPSULES ARE FORMED.

WHEN a bottle of wine or other liquor is corked and sealed, a capsule of lead foil is usually slipped over all as a finishing touch. These capsules are manufactured in a thimble form, having a flat top, and it is necessary, when it is placed on the bottle, to press and rub and squeeze it until it takes the form of the glass on which it rests, as shown at Fig. 4. The little device shown in Fig. 1 performs this operation easily and quickly. It is made of polished brass, and is securely fixed to the wall at a convenient height. Fig. 2 shows a section. The cap, A, has been unscrewed, and the rubber ring, B, placed in position. The cap, A, is now screwed on, and the head of the bottle with the capsule in position is pressed inward through the hole, C. The elasticity of the rubber accommodates all the inequalities of the bottle, and, when withdrawn, the capsule is seen to be fitting like a glove. The tapering form of Fig. 2 is to allow the instrument to be used for different sizes of bottles (say pints and quarts), a different size of rubber ring also being used.



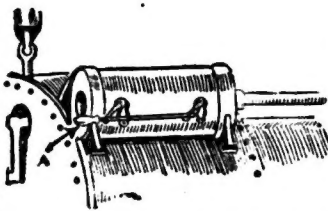
TO KEEP YOUR COAT.

RESTAURANT-KEEPERS, hotel proprietors, and other public caterers are frequently bothered by the fact that some customer has lost his overcoat. To meet this difficulty a patent hook with a snap-lock has been introduced in some establishments. The lower part is on a hinge, A, and as soon as a customer hangs his coat up he snaps the lock, which then can only be opened by the little key which the waiter hands him. There is thus no fear of an absent-minded stranger or a professional thief purloining his property.



EXPELS THE WATER.

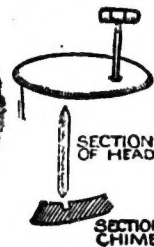
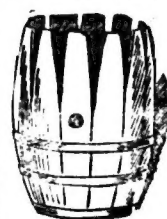
WHEN watching a portable engine at work sawing or thrashing or driving other machinery, you may have noticed that when it is started again after any stoppage, the driver opens two little taps fitted to the cylinder by drawing the rod A, which is connected with both. There is then a great rushing of steam and a sound of "swish," "swish," as the head of the piston passes by each tap, which becomes more rapid as the speed increases. In a short time he closes them, as the object, viz., freeing the cylinder of water, is gained. The same expulsion of steam may be observed at the stations when the locomotive is commencing its journey, but it is effected in a somewhat different manner. When an engine has been standing any length of time, the cylinder becomes cool, and whatever steam is in it becomes condensed into water. This is not elastic like steam, and, mingling with the latter, when it is admitted to the cylinder, would seriously affect the working of the engine, causing "priming," which resembles a shower of black, sooty rain caused by the water mixed with steam being forced through the funnel; and if there should be a quantity of it, even more serious results would follow, such as bursting the cylinder. By opening these taps the water is harmlessly expelled.



We pay half-a-crown for each accepted picture par. used on this page. If you've an idea, send it along.

HOW TO PUT A HEAD IN A CASK.

It is quite an easy matter to take the head out of a cask, but not so simple to put it on again. Knock off the hoops of the upper half and loosen the chimes, and the end drops down and can then be removed. But first mark the position of the head by cutting a notch in it with a chisel and a corresponding one on the stave opposite, so that it may be replaced in the same position. The head is shaved to a thin edge all round the circumference and fits into a groove cut in the chimes to hold it. To put it in again, slip a couple of the large hoops over the staves loosely; then take a stout gimlet and bore it into the head sufficiently to get a grip. Lift it carefully, and place the edge into the groove on the opposite side to the gimlet. To hold it in position press a hoop downwards so as to gradually get some of the staves into place, and as soon as a few hold the head the trouble is over and the hoops can be driven on tight. This method is adopted when building new casks.



THE SHIP'S KEEL.

FIG. 1 shows a section of a small ship, having its keel central, and the second picture depicts a ship of much larger size with two keels. The increasing size of these large vessels has long ago rendered the central keel impossible, on account of the ship's greater draught or depth below the surface of the water. At sea, in deep water there could be no reason for alteration, but the navigation of shallow waters and river channels rendered a change imperative. The keel could not be discarded, as it plays a considerable part in steadying the ship and keeping it from rolling, so now two keels are constructed, as in Fig. 2, and called rolling keels. These (extending, as they do, the whole length of the ship), it will be at once apparent, must be very effective in checking the tendency to roll. They do not project beyond the greatest width of the hull, and so are less liable to damage against dock walls.



A Neglected Custom.

Some villages have grown so enormously that many of the old-fashioned Christmas customs have died out. For instance, at one time all the inhabitants of Norwich were provided on Christmas morning with a free breakfast by the farmer of the Church property. Norwich now boasts a population of over 100,000 people, so it is no cause for wonder that the custom has fallen into abeyance.

A Costly Card.

The costliest Christmas card ever made was executed to the order of the Gaekwar of Baroda, an Indian potentate, who wished to present it to a European lady. It was a piece of ivory 12 in. by 10 in., and more than forty elephants were sacrificed before a perfect piece could be obtained. Four ivory-carvers worked incessantly for six months engraving ten thousand scenes upon it, and the eyesight of all four was affected, and one went totally blind shortly afterwards. Diamonds surrounded its edge.

The Original Waits.

The waits, or "wayghtes," were in early times musical night-watchmen in palaces, castles, camps, and walled towers who piped watch at stated hours of the night, sometimes for the purpose of calling up or changing the guard; at others to awake certain persons at appointed times by soft music at their chamber doors. In 1575, the waits who took part in the Lord Mayor's procession are described as wearing blue gowns, with red caps, and collars of silver around their necks.

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

Christmas in October.

Some astronomers and scientists assert that the event which Christmas commemorates occurred either in the last week of September or the first week of October. December 25th was only fixed upon by the Church in the fifth century in order to supplant by a Christian festival the pagan holiday which took place on this day.

A Starving City.

Thirty-nine years ago Paris was besieged by the Germans, and the Parisians were in the throes of starvation. At Christmas time rabbits could not be obtained for less than 22s. each, dog was half-a-crown a pound, and fine rats fetched ninepence each. Even carrots and turnips were disposed of at ninepence each.

The Babes of Belgium.

In Holland the little children hang up their stockings in expectation of a visit from Santa Claus just as the youngsters of this country do; but in Belgium another custom prevails. There, the children fill their shoes with beans and carrots on Christmas Eve, and set them in the chimney-piece for the good Saint Nicholas's horse, and in the morning expect to find them filled with sweetmeats as a reward for their good behaviour.

A Few Seasonable Items of Fact that will be Sure to Interest You.

Work Not Stopped.

In Birmingham and big Lancashire manufacturing towns many factories are open on Christmas Day. The reason is that large contracts expire on the 31st, and to stop work for a complete day might cause a serious financial loss. The workers, however, usually receive higher wages.

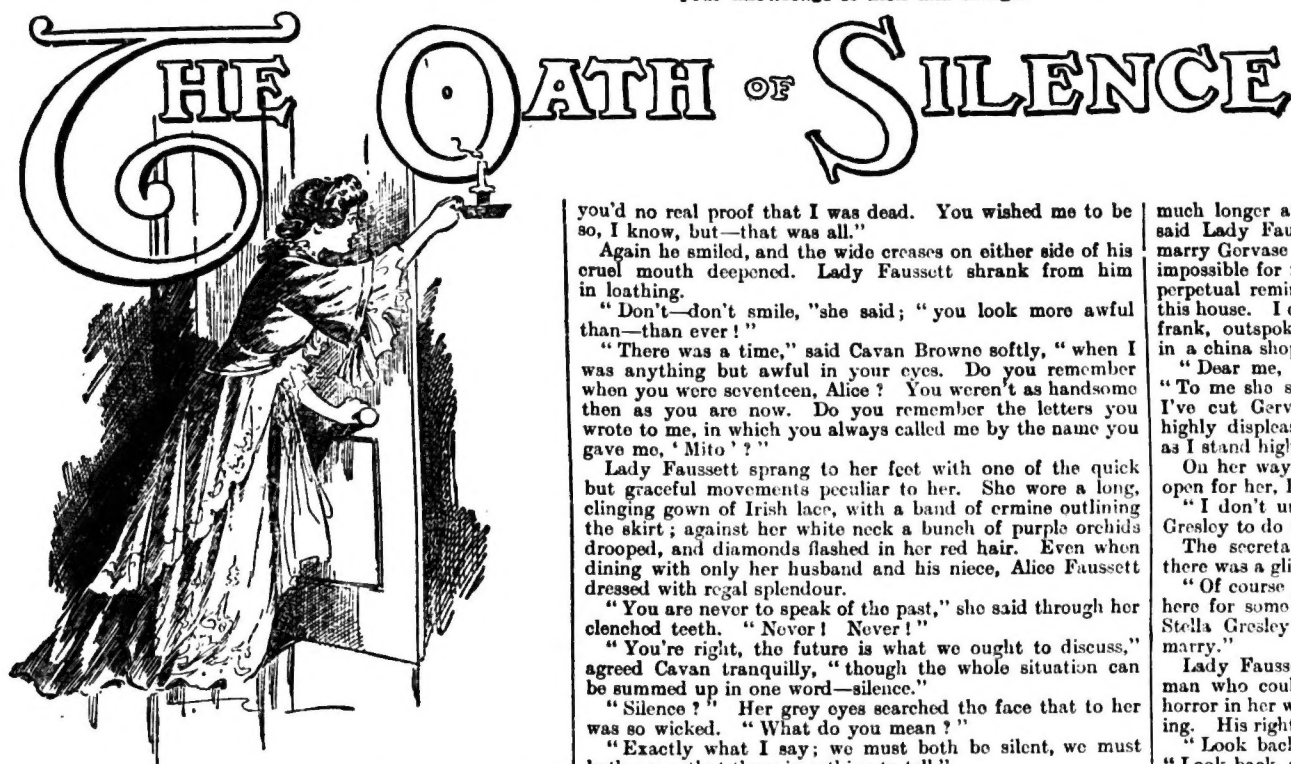
Fasting at Yuletide.

In 1644, at the time of the Commonwealth, Parliament ordained that Christmas Day should be kept as a fast. The order remained in force for twelve years, and for shops to be closed was a crime, whilst market days were intentionally altered so as to fall upon the great day. Soldiers searched the homes of those suspected of preparing for festivity.

The Yorkshire Ghost.

A few Christmases ago a ghost was reported to be scourging certain Yorkshire roads, and, most remarkable, he rode a bicycle! Some investigators watched for him one night, and as the midnight hour boomed forth the white-clad figure came whirling along. It appeared he was a pastry-cook who had not troubled to change his business garments before journeying home after a long day's labour.

Here is a serial story which is quite new in idea and original in the telling. As a rule, a serial story tells of extraordinary and impossible situations in which extraordinary and impossible people play their parts. Such stories are not the less interesting because they are untrue to life, on the contrary, they may be thrilling in the extreme. But it is good to get away from the usual. In "The Oath of Silence" are situations which it is possible to imagine might happen to you and me, therefore the story has an added value, for it is human. In reading it you will discover people who are just like those you possibly know, and you will find that you have added to your knowledge of men and things.



By
SYBIL LETHBRIDGE and
OLIVER ALLEN.

CHAPTER ONE. Lady Faussett's Peril.

THE man and the woman—the one standing, the other seated—faced one another with a composure that was so elaborate that its artificial nature was at once betrayed. Silence in the great room was absolute, the soft whispering fall of the ashes in the grate could be heard as well as the quick ticking of the clock at Lady Faussett's elbow.

There was a little sound outside the door. Instantly the man's eyes turned in that direction. He had the air of one who was watching, who was on guard. But the door remained closed, and he laughed—a rather harsh, uneasy laugh.

"I thought—it was Sir Mortimer," he said. "Alice—for Heaven's sake try to appear a little more natural. You're staring at me as though I were Medusa herself. You're absolutely like a stone."

Lady Faussett looked down, a little shiver passed over her slim, girlish figure. She was an exquisite creature, with a wonderful exotic loveliness that marked her out amongst all other women.

She had marvellous red hair—such hair as is rarely seen, though art struggles desperately to achieve it; ice-grey eyes, so shaded by thick dark lashes that in some lights they were of a velvet blackness; and a scarlet, full mouth, that was rarely quite closed over square white teeth. Her skin was smooth as a gardenia petal, and, though she was thirty-five, she looked one-and-twenty.

Her husband was Sir Mortimer Faussett, late governor of one of the largest and loveliest of the West Indian Islands. She was considered the most fascinating woman in London, and five thousand a year was spent on her dress alone.

Her companion, leaning carelessly against the Adams mantelpiece and glancing down at his lovely companion with a scarcely concealed smile of scorn, was Sir Mortimer's secretary, a man whom the ex-governor had engaged during Lady Faussett's absence in the south.

Alice Faussett could find no words to express her horror and dismay when she returned to find Cavan Browne installed at Howcroft, and already her husband's right hand and favourite.

Sir Mortimer was a man who gave his confidence reluctantly, who watched and proved those who served him, but if they stood the tests to which he subjected them, then his belief in them was absolute. Lady Faussett had much influence with her husband, but on certain points Sir Mortimer was invulnerable; his wife knew that hints, suggestions, or innuendoes were useless when directed against the man or woman who had won his trust.

She looked up suddenly at the smooth, subtle face with the deep-set eyes and lipless mouth. It inspired her with fresh fear and horror, for the man appeared the incarnation of ruthlessness.

"What," she asked huskily, "are you going to do?"

"Nothing," Browne answered, with the air that her question surprised him, "except to continue to draw my salary from Sir Mortimer. It's a good one, Alice. This is the best berth I've had for a long time. Your husband and I get on so well together. That's rather curious, isn't it?"

He laughed, and the laugh of Cavan Browne was one of the worst things about him, it was so cruel, so full of latent savagery. It creased his pale cheeks into multitudinous wrinkles, and brought out the wicked lines that moulded chin and jaw. Lady Faussett's slim fingers twisted themselves convulsively in the long diamond chain she wore; it had been her husband's last gift to her, and the stones were Brazilian of the finest water.

"I thought you were dead," she cried, with passionate vehemence, but Browne smilingly corrected her.

"You hoped I was," he said. "You had reckoned the chances against my turning up again, and you came to the conclusion that it was a safe speculation to call yourself a widow—and marry Sir Mortimer. Don't humbug, Alice,

you'd no real proof that I was dead. You wished me to be so, I know, but—that was all."

Again he smiled, and the wide creases on either side of his cruel mouth deepened. Lady Faussett shrank from him in loathing.

"Don't—don't smile," she said; "you look more awful than—than ever!"

"There was a time," said Cavan Browne softly, "when I was anything but awful in your eyes. Do you remember when you were seventeen, Alice? You weren't as handsome then as you are now. Do you remember the letters you wrote to me, in which you always called me by the name you gave me, 'Mito'?"

Lady Faussett sprang to her feet with one of the quick but graceful movements peculiar to her. She wore a long, clinging gown of Irish lace, with a band of ermine outlining the skirt; against her white neck a bunch of purple orchids drooped, and diamonds flashed in her red hair. Even when dining with only her husband and his niece, Alice Faussett dressed with regal splendour.

"You are never to speak of the past," she said through her clenched teeth. "Never! Never!"

"You're right, the future is what we ought to discuss," agreed Cavan tranquilly, "though the whole situation can be summed up in one word—silence."

"Silence?" Her grey eyes searched the face that to her was so wicked. "What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say; we must both be silent, we must both agree that there is nothing to tell."

Lady Faussett drew a long, sobbing breath of relief. She was a woman in whom conscience, if not dead, was so dormant as to be scarcely taken into serious consideration. She was willing to lead a life that would be a lie, to deceive her husband if only she could keep her position, her wealth, all that she held most dear.

"Let us understand one another," pursued Browne. "You return here after some four or five months spent abroad, to find me your husband's secretary. You say you thought I was dead—that you were a widow—free to marry Sir Mortimer. As we parted some fifteen years ago, there was perhaps some excuse for you, but I doubt if that excuse will serve you with Sir Mortimer. I could claim you, of course. I could make no end of a row and scandal, and the evening papers would go mad in head-lines. But I don't want to do that. I'm going to keep absolutely silent, on one condition."

"And that is—" asked Alice, in some anxiety. She remembered this man's wild and reckless extravagance, the passion for gambling that had brought ruin and crime and shame to them, and she trembled, for she knew what life meant when overshadowed by the blackmailer. "What? That I pay you a certain income?"

Browne passed his hand over his sleek, black head, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Oh, dear me, no," he said easily, "nothing, my dear Alice, so sordid as money enters into our transactions with one another, I hope. No, I merely ask for you to promise that as long as I am silent you will be the same."

"Is that all?" she asked, considerably relieved. "Oh, of course I will. Why, it's to my own advantage to say nothing."

"I ask you to swear it, to call Heaven to witness that may you die if you break your word. You must swear it, on that cross," he said gravely, pointing to an ivory crucifix, a masterpiece of early Italian art, that hung over the writing-table in Lady Faussett's boudoir.

He knew her to be superstitious, and to have a pagan dread of binding herself by oath on so holy a thing.

Without waiting for her reply, Cavan Browne moved across the room, and took down the cross. He brought it to Alice, and there was fear in her splendid grey eyes, as she gazed on it. That moribund conscience of hers was striving for fresh life.

"I can't," she muttered. "What—what you ask of me is—is wicked. Cavan, I can't."

"Can you give up all this for the sake of a scruple?" he asked quietly, and he waved his hand towards the refined and wonderful luxury that reigned about her, the exquisite setting for the jewel of her loveliness. "It's better to be Lady Faussett, isn't it, than plain Mrs. Browne?"

Alice shivered, for the honey-smooth voice held a threat. She had grown to love the dainty life of ease and plenty, of freedom from carking care. This man could destroy it, could send her out into the world that had been so cruel to her. Better live a lie than take up the old existence once more. She bent her head until her lips touched the cross, and she repeated after Cavan the dread formula of the oath:

"I promise to be silent, and may I die if I break my vow," she muttered, and the fathomless eyes of Cavan Browne flamed red with triumph. He moved softly back and replaced the crucifix.

"Good," he said, "I know you will keep that oath, Alice; you're too great a coward to break it. We ought to return to Sir Mortimer and Miss Gresley, I suppose, now that I have given you my opinion on those cameos. By the way, I want to congratulate you, Alice, on the way in which you kept your head when your husband—as I must call him—presented me to you. You were magnificent, and, when I was longing for just a little private conversation with you, and wishing that Sir Mortimer would stop prying on about antiquities, you asked me if I would give you my opinion as to the genuineness of some cameos you had bought. It really was awfully sharp of you."

"Was it? I was feeling I should go mad if I had to stay

much longer and listen to Mortimer and the child Stella," said Lady Faussett impatiently. "I wish that girl would marry Gervase Fenton and be out of my way. She makes it impossible for me to forget that I was a governess. She's a perpetual reminder of the time when I was a dependent in this house. I can't bear her. She's one of those insufferably frank, outspoken girls that are as agreeable in life as a bull in a china shop."

"Dear me, I'm sorry you don't like her," said Browne. "To me she seems the dearest little thing. In fact, I hope I've cut Gervase Fenton out. Her uncle, Sir Mortimer's highly displeased with him, and I fancy now's my chance, as I stand high in his favour."

On her way to the door, that Cavan Browne was holding open for her, Lady Faussett stopped.

"I don't understand you," she said. "What has Stella Gresley to do with you?"

The secretary shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly, but there was a glint of triumph in his cold eyes.

"Of course you don't know," he said. "You've not been here for some time. You've never seen us together, but—Stella Gresley is the woman I love, the woman I mean to marry."

Lady Faussett fell back, a hideous fear upon her of this man who could dare to say so vile a thing. He read the horror in her white face, and instantly his own grew threatening. His right hand shot out and gripped her by the wrist.

"Look back—at the cross on that wall," he said slowly. "Look back, and remember your oath of silence."

His steel-strong fingers crushed her soft flesh, leaving deep marks, but of the pain Alice Faussett was heedless. She looked into the cruel eyes that blazed with anger at her daring.

"If you try—to make Stella care for you—I—I shall speak," she said steadily. "I warn you that I shall."

"And I warn you that if you speak—you will die," he answered, "and I am a man who keeps his word."

There was a certain dispassionate ferocity in his voice that told Lady Faussett that he was sincere. A dull despair enveloped her. She knew him of old, this relentless, unmoved man. Nothing could turn him from his purpose once fixed; her imagination sketched a hasty picture of Stella, innocent, youthful Stella, sacrificed to this man who had, as Alice knew, a strange power over the heart of woman.

She suddenly realised her helplessness, how little she could do, unless she did the one thing that conscience told her was right, honourable, and just. To save Stella, she must confess the truth to her husband, as an impostor she must appear before the man who worshipped her, who had given her his name, and his honour into her keeping.

A little moan came from her pale lips; no way of escape appeared to her. Cavan Browne laughed softly, for in that cry of despair he heard the note of defeat.

"Come," he said, "we really must return to the drawing-room; we can't discuss cameos for ever. Let me give you my arm, Lady Faussett, and take you back to—your husband."

CHAPTER TWO. The Figure in the Fire.

IN his study—the only simply furnished room that Howcroft contained—Sir Mortimer Faussett sat beside the fire and stared with dreamy, contemplative eyes into the heart of the glowing coals.

On the table beside him were piled the proofs of his work, the idol of spare hours (that had been few in his busy life as governor of the 11 Antia Islands), an exhaustive treatise on the folk lore, on the various superstitions, cults, and practices that still abound in the West Indies amongst the black population.

It was a labour of love with Sir Mortimer; he had collected all the data during his governorship, and now, with his secretary's assistance, had put it into shape. A publisher for the great work had been found, and Sir Mortimer looked forward as eagerly to the appearance of his book as a girl to her first ball.

But though he had left his niece alone in the great pink-and-white drawing-room, on the plea of correcting proofs, Sir Mortimer was idle. Nor, as he gazed at the fire, was he thinking of the work, the child of his brain.

His thoughts were busy with his wife, with the woman who was to him the sum of all happiness, whom he worshipped none the less because she was often wayward and capricious, because she treated him carelessly and with a light-hearted lack of consideration that he scarcely realised.

In her husband's eyes, Alice Faussett was perfect. It was to him, in his simple-minded humility, marvellous that so exquisite a creature should have chosen so rough-hewn and grim-visaged a mate as himself. If never occurred to him that his wealth—inherited from a distant cousin at the time when he was about to resign his governorship—could have had any effect on Alice. That that perfect face hid a mercenary, calculating soul was beyond him to suspect.

Her charm and beauty dazzled the rugged, shy, silent man, who had never thought of matrimony until "Mrs. Baynes" came to Howcroft as Stella's governess.

He had seen her, he had loved her, and she had won the prize of that season. Within six months of coming to his house as his niece's governess, Alice was reigning there as his wife.

That was five years ago; Sir Mortimer still worshipped her.

If the world collided with a comet—what would happen? See "The Danger of the Comet" in the Christmas Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE—a summary of amazing facts illustrated with realistic pictures.

The only drop of sadness in his cup of bliss was the fact that there was no son to follow him, the little daughter born to them a year after their marriage had lived only to draw breath, and all that remained of that episode was a sad and wistful memory enshrined in the heart of her father. Whether Lady Faussett had sorrowed deeply or the reverse it was impossible to say, for she had never mentioned the child whose birth had nearly cost her her life.

The sound of the door opening made Sir Mortimer look up. His wife had entered the room, and she now came softly up to him and put her hand upon his shoulder. Her grey eyes were, it seemed to her husband, as he had never seen them before—full of a wistful tenderness. He turned his face to the fair hand resting on his shoulder, and laid his lips against it.

"My dear," he murmured, "my dear—if you only knew how good it is to have you again. Three months, Alice, it's a long, long time!"

"Is it?" She knelt beside him, her wonderful hair almost brushing his cheek. "Do you really miss me, Mortimer, when you've got that precious book to correct and revise, and when you're not doing that, there's Stella to amuse you and be a companion to you? Do you still want me?"

His arms were round her. Their clasp was his answer. Alice suddenly hid her face against his breast; that long stifled conscience of hers was struggling back to life. What would he say, she wondered miserably, if he knew the truth, this devoted, blindly-loving man, in whose eyes she was a pearl of price, a woman far surpassing all others?

He worshipped her as a devout Catholic his patron saint. What would he say if she confessed the truth to him? Tremulously she looked up into his face, in her mind the unspoken words in which her confession would be couched.

"I was not Alice Baynes when you married me, I was Alice Browne, I thought I was a widow, I had not seen my husband for years. He deserted me when I was a girl of twenty, and went to America. I heard he was dead, and I was glad, for I hated him. I married you because I was sick of my life of struggle. Now I come home to find that my first husband is not dead. He is alive, and in this house. He is your secretary, Cavan Browne!"

"Dearest, are you cold?" inquired Sir Mortimer anxiously. "You are shivering all over. My child, you are so imprudent sometimes, so reckless of your health; you never will wrap up enough. Let me draw this chair up for you close to the fire. I don't like your kneeling beside me, my love, it is the wrong way about. I am the worshipper, you the queen. Are you quite comfortable? Sure? A footstool, there, I feel very honoured at your having sought me out here. You don't often come to my study, Alice."

She smiled at him as he fussed over her fondly. After her three months' absence from him this tenderness and care that had fretted her in past years was very sweet. A little quiver ran through her, as she realised how soon she might lose it, how soon be shut out for ever from the faithful heart that beat she knew for her alone. Sir Mortimer was not a man to forgive deceit, such deceit as she had practised.

Alice glanced up at her husband almost fearfully as he stood before the fire smiling at her. His deeply-tanned face was at its best when lit up by the tenderness his wife alone called forth. His small greenish hazel eyes were quite benignant beneath the futting black brows, and the sternness of the mouth was relaxed into benevolence.

Alice remembered, however, the few occasions when she had seen him angry, when his wrath had been as the rising of the tempest, and she quaked at the thought of its being directed against herself. For the first time she feared him, his anger would be terrible, for it would be righteous. He might even kill her, and Alice dreaded death.

"You've not told me," observed Sir Mortimer, producing his most elderly and best-beloved pipe, "how you like my—by the way, I may smoke, mayn't I? Thanks, my dear; as I was saying, you haven't told me how you like my new secretary."

Alice's slender hands clasped themselves suddenly as they lay in her lap, but she was well trained, for the necessity for subterfuge had taught her composure.

"He seems—quite nice," she said colourlessly. "You find him useful?"

"He's the best man I ever had," answered Sir Mortimer enthusiastically; "knows his work and does it, and is never slack. Goffey, the author, found him for me. Browne's a fellow who seems to have had an adventurous sort of life—been all over the world, knows the Tropics as well as Humboldt, and has been everything, from bell boy in an American hotel to an orchid hunter in Brazil. My dear, why did you start? You're not going in for nerves, are you? I thought you didn't know you had any."

"Nor do I, it's—it's just the journey that's tired me, nothing else," murmured Alice. "Is—he is a permanent secretary, or—or are you only keeping him till your book is ready?"

"I shall keep him as long as ever he'll stay with me," declared Sir Mortimer, his rough face, that was as full of drawing as a Holbein, radiant. "Why, he's a find, Alice, there's nothing that fellow doesn't know. What about your cameos, by the way? Did he say they were genuine? These things are so abominably faked nowadays, that you've not a chance unless you're a regular connoisseur."

He laughed sonorously. It was so good to have Alice back again, to have her there beside him, exquisite as the Romanesque that he loved, the gems of the collection left him by his cousin; Alice, adorable in every word and look and gesture, in each movement of her lovely head, her supple figure, in the slow, subtle smile that thrilled her husband still with a bliss that was almost cruel. Suddenly he bent over her and clasped her hands in his.

"Little girl," he murmured softly, "oh, little girl, if you knew how black the days have been since you left me. I don't think I can part with you again."

He bent his head until his lips closed on hers, his hand was at her throat, that long, snow-white throat, with the diamond chain about it. Alice's lashes fluttered on her cheeks. If he knew, if he only knew the truth! She could not rid herself of that haunting, torturing thought, and she pictured to herself the rage of Sir Mortimer. For into her careless, indifferent toleration of him there now crept a terrible dread, she knew that she would always fear him, and it is not good to live with fear in one's bosom.

She contrived to move away from his caressing hand, and he did not see the terror that darkened those wonderful grey eyes.

"How is Stella?" she asked abruptly, "I thought her a little depressed and silent at dinner. I hope that—that Gervase isn't worrying her. He's such a dear, nice boy, that I should hate if anything went wrong with their engagement."

Sir Mortimer's expression changed instantly; it became stern and most menacing.

"Gervase has been displeasing me," he said coldly, "I'm very disappointed in the boy. He has been behaving in a manner that shows me that it would be very wrong to trust my little Stella to him. I have been a little uneasy about him for some time, and whilst you were away I caused inquiries to be made, and I'm sorry to say that they only confirmed my fears."

Alice's full mouth trembled slightly.

"Who made the inquiries?" she asked, and her husband looked at her in some surprise.

"Why do you wish to know?" he said, and she turned away before replying.

"Because—because you may have made a mistake," she said, "I like Gervase, and I can't believe any ill of him. Mortimer, if—he's a little wild, don't you think that as soon as he marries he will settle down? Don't you think that it would be the best thing to let him marry Stella at once?"

"No, I do not," retorted Sir Mortimer, with some asperity. "Really, Alice, I'm surprised that you should suggest such a thing, considering what I have told you."

"But you've told me nothing," returned Alice lightly. "Come, Mortimer, I never saw you so severe before; can't you forgive the poor boy and let him have Stella? I know he's devoted to her, and she to him, and they are so suited to one another. Now, Mortimer, don't refuse me the first thing I ask you when I come home. Let those two marry at once and be happy ever afterwards."

She slipped her smooth, bare arm through his, her pale face raised, all the witchery and glamour that she possessed in her grey eyes. It was a new sensation to Alice to be entreating for something that was not for herself; for once she was unselfish, her only desire was to see Stella safe, the helpless innocent lamb protected from the relentless cunning and wickedness of the wolf.

"Dear Mortimer, do, do say yes," she pleaded, and her red hair swept across his cheek, the delicate, elusive scent she used was in his nostrils. Her fingers stole into his, but Sir Mortimer was firm.

"I cannot, my dear," he said, with all the solemnity that he felt the occasion demanded. "Gervase must prove himself worthy of Stella before I allow them to marry."

Alice with difficulty repressed the impatience that such conscientious care on her husband's part aroused in her. To gain her end she must act delicately to work. She must not allow Sir Mortimer to think that she was too easily satisfied in the matter of moral excellence. She must guard against his thinking that she deemed any young man, of decent habits and appearance, a fit husband for Stella.

"Dear Mortimer, how I do admire you for being so firm with the young people," she said winningly. "I'm such a poor, easy-going creature myself, that I know I should allow the dear girl to marry Gervase, when I saw that she wanted to. I'm afraid that when I'm fond of someone, as I am of Stella, I only wish to see her happy. I don't weigh the rights and wrongs of a case. Forgive me for being so impulsive, Mortimer, but I am so happy with you, that I can't help feeling that every woman ought to marry the man she loves. I can't imagine that anything else matters."

Honey-sweet words, and ineffably precious to Sir Mortimer, but they did not, as Alice had hoped they would succeed in doing, blind his judgment and lead him to consent to what he thought undesirable.

"My dear, you make me feel very pleased with myself," he said cheerfully. "Such a testimonial to matrimony from you, Alice, could scarcely do otherwise. Nevertheless, I fear that I must keep to what I said. Until Gervase shows signs of amendment, I cannot allow him to be engaged to Stella. I do not feel that it would be right. You are so eager for the happiness of others, my love—at least, what you think would be their happiness—that you do not pause to consider whether you are really acting in their best interests. Is not that so?"

"Yes," said Lady Faussett, "perhaps."

She still had her arm through her husband's, but her ice-grey eyes were no longer raised to him. They were averted, lest he might by some evil chance read, and understand, the deep scorn and bitter anger that they held. She hated to realise that she had failed to move Sir Mortimer, that she had played Delilah to no purpose. His precise and faintly-pompous answer, even with its underlying note of kindness, had tried her self-control to its widest limit. Abruptly she withdrew her arm from his.

"I think I'll go back to Stella, the poor child has been alone long enough," she said. "I'm afraid, Mortimer, that we shall have only a very sad and fading star whilst Gervase is forbidden the house. I was distressed to notice that she seemed to have lost her wonderful spirits."

"It is most unfortunate," said Sir Mortimer, "and I am fond of the boy, though he is only a distant cousin. I have always looked upon him almost as a son, but really, after the reports that Browne brought me back, I didn't feel justified in allowing the engagement to continue."

"Oh, Mr. Browne was your detective," said Lady Faussett, unable to resist the sneer. "I quite see, Mortimer, that he is a very valuable person."

Then she took herself and her now scarcely-hidden anger from the library, but she did not repair to the drawing-room, to cheer Stella's solitude. She went back to her boudoir, and in an agony of helpless despair stood gazing at the cross upon which she had taken the oath Cavan Browne had forced on her. Then, with the restlessness of a spirit ill-at-ease, she went to the window, and, flinging it wide, leaned out into the freshness of the fair spring night.

Howcroft was built upon the cliffs, at whose base the tide swept in. The sound of the sea was the music that Alice loved; a certain tranquillity came to her as she listened to the deep-toned roar. The gardens beneath her window were drenched in times of storm with the salt spray.

Everything seemed at peace, however, to-night. Alice's

gaze wandered vaguely over the flower-beds, trim paths, and line of trees that sloped to the edge of the cliff. In the faint moonlight the figure of a man disappearing behind a group of firs caught her eye. Instantly she shrank back; it must be Cavan Browne. She remembered that he had told her that a room opening on to the terrace had been given to him as a study, and doubtless he was taking a last stroll before returning.

But the thought of him amongst the newly-opened flowers and the sweet green of the young trees spoiled all delight in their beauty for Alice Faussett. Shuddering, she drew away, and went hastily from the room, downstairs to the white-and-pink drawing-room, where she had left Stella alone.

As Alice reached it she paused outside the door. Within, somebody was playing softly on the piano, a queer, running little melody, the notes tripping and slipping into one another, a tune that Alice knew of old, that she had not heard for long years, that she associated with the blazing stars of a Tropic night, the heavy scent of strange, gorgeous flowers, the restles, fierce loveliness of one of the world's fairest spots.

Instantly in spirit she was back in Rio, the harbour lights flamed before her, the blue blackness of sea and sky were about her, the thrum of the guitar, the low, quick laugh of lazy revellers, the liquid sound of a language she had striven to forget, were in her ears. Time had gone back, the miracle had been done by that haunting scrap of music.

With a white, rigidly-set face, Lady Faussett opened the door, and entered the room. Cavan Browne was at the piano; at her entrance he half-turned, one hand still moving softly, swiftly over the keys, near him sat Stella Gresley, listening to the music that he made for her, after the way of a man, since Love and its companion Song were made.

"I thought you were out," said Lady Faussett abruptly, addressing Cavan. "I was looking at the garden and I saw you going towards the cliff path."

"Your eyes must have deceived you," said Browne pleasantly; "I've not been out of this room since I came in after giving you my opinion on your cameos, Lady Faussett. Miss Gresley can bear me out, can't you?"

"Oh, yes; it couldn't have been Mr. Browne," said Stella hastily, and, as her aunt thought, with some nervousness; "he has been playing to me, aunt, and singing such delightful old tunes like nothing else I've ever heard. They make you want to laugh and cry at once. What did you say they were, Mr. Browne? Was it Indian?"

"They come from the Tropics, Miss Gresley, the songs that are learned one doesn't know how," said Cavan, still with his eyes fixed on Alice, whilst he drew rippling melody from the piano keys; "they are supposed to be rather wonderful from an emotional point of view. In them, Love's language is said to be clear and simple. Heart cries to heart, Miss Gresley, that is all. I doubt whether the composers know anything about the laws of harmony and composition. As they felt, so they spoke in music. The result is sometimes almost terrifying."

"I'm sure it frightens me, that music," said Stella, with a little movement of her white shoulders; she was a charming girl of the sun-and-wind-swept type, her complexion red-brown, her dark, widely-open eyes clear with the vision of one who has looked on the rising of the sun, and into the deep distances of sea and sky. Her very fair hair was still tied with the black bow of schoolroom days; in many ways she was a child—but in others a very woman, loyal, devoted, and with the courage of an innocent heart.

"I was certain it was you I saw in the garden a few minutes ago," said Lady Faussett, addressing Browne with a suspicion that she scarcely tried to conceal; "it was your height, your figure, I saw you distinctly. Whom else could it have been?"

"My double, my familiar," said Cavan composedly; he had turned to the piano again and was now playing the latest banality from a musical play; "this isn't alarming, is it, Miss Gresley? Like so many things in this country—it means nothing."

"If it were not you I saw, who could it have been?" persisted Alice. "There is no one else who would come by the cliff path—it is a private way."

"Miss Gresley, I appeal to you," said Cavan, glancing over his shoulder, "have I left the piano since I came in here?"

"No, no, of course you haven't," said Stella hurriedly, again as it seemed to Alice, with unnecessary nervousness. "Aunt Alice, you must have made a mistake, it couldn't have been Mr. Browne."

"Then it was some one who had no right to be there," said Lady Faussett decidedly; "a burglar, who knew of the private way. I must tell the servants to see to it."

Cavan, playing some crashing chords, looked at her with half-closed eyes of amusement as she moved towards the bell; Stella followed her, he watched the two women till a screen hid them from view.

"Aunt Alice," said Stella in a low voice; "please don't make any inquiries; it—it wasn't Mr. Browne, and—it wasn't a burglar. I know—at least, I think I do, who it was. Promise, if I tell, you won't be angry—and you won't let uncle be angry either?"

The trembling of the soft red lips, the tears in the appealing brown eyes astonished Alice, who, until now, had regarded her husband's niece as a creature with overwhelming good spirits, good temper, and little tact. Now, she saw another Stella, one to whom had come the badge of womanhood, sorrow.

Alice softened instantly; with her knowledge of the danger that threatened Stella, of the love that like some deadly upas tree had grown up beside her, and might one day kill her with its noxious fumes, she was more gentle and affectionate towards her niece than she had ever yet shown herself.

"My dear little girl," she said, "I think I guess; it is Gervase who is trying to see you; he has come down to Howcroft, in defiance of your uncle, and you are going to have a romantic Romeo and Juliet meeting in the moonlight. Isn't that so?"

"How clever of you to guess," exclaimed Stella simply, "yes, that is it, but you mustn't think, Aunt Alice, that I'm really deceiving uncle—I mean, he knows, I told him so—that I shall never, never give up Gervase, and that I shall see him whenever I can. I love Uncle Mortimer, and he's been better to me than words can say, but Gervase must come first, and I do think uncle's rather hard on him. Gervase had only spent a little money on horrid horses that never would win,

but he's given it up. He really has, auntie. Only yesterday, in his letter to me, he said that next time he backed a horse, he'd back a donkey."

Stella's dimples reappeared as she repeated this witticism of her lover's, but they were soon lost in the beseeching look she fixed on Lady Faussett.

"I can't give him up," she pleaded. "Oh, Aunt Alice—don't say that I ought to—or—that you don't think that I must see him to-night. He's staying at —, and comes over here sometimes. Uncle won't have him in the house, and I know people think that Gervase is in the wrong. Goffey tells me the servants gossip. But I don't care, he's waiting for me now, and I don't know how on earth I'm to slip away. I don't think I'm a bit good at managing and pretending," she added ruefully; "I hate it, but it's worth it to see Gervase."

"You love him then, really," asked Lady Faussett, half-curiously; to her Stella still seemed a child, but the soul of a woman looked out of the eyes that met Alice's.

"With all my heart and soul," she said quietly, "and because I know that he feels the same for me—I can't obey my uncle. I can't give him up."

"Hush," breathed Lady Faussett; the garish, noisy tune that Cavan Browne had been playing had subsided into a low murmur as of the pipe of half-awakened birds, of the purling of a little brook, and drowsy hum of insects beneath a noon-day sun. Alice glanced fearfully towards the hidden player; if he heard, if he guessed, that she was working against him, that she was trying to free his unconscious victim, who could say what he might do? Silently and swiftly, she drew Stella towards the window that led into the gardens. On this balmy night it stood wide open—it was the way of escape for Stella.

"Go," Lady Faussett said, "Stella, I'm on your side; on yours and Gervase's."

When, somewhat abruptly, Cavan Browne ceased his playing and looked round the room, he found Lady Faussett alone, and ready to thank him for the pleasure his music had given her.

"Where is Miss Gresley?" he asked, cutting short Alice's amabilities. "I thought she was listening too."

"She has gone to bed, and I am going to follow her example," said Lady Faussett sweetly, "good night, Mr. Browne."

Her command of herself, her gracious suave manner, that, he felt was exactly what it might be towards her husband's secretary, angered Cavan with a sense of losing power over her.

"Come into the garden for a moment before you go," he said, "I'd like to show you my workroom. It's right at the end of the terrace, you can look into it from the gardens as we stroll past. I won't," he added, with a grin, "ask you to go to it by the other way—through the passage, because we might meet Sir Mortimer, and he'd be wondering why I wanted to show you my study, but you can see what I want you to from the terrace. There is a light."

But Lady Faussett drew back superbly.

"I really don't see why I should trouble," she said; "I know the room you have; there's nothing remarkable in it that would make it worth while for me to go into the gardens to peep in at it."

"It depends on what you think worth looking at," retorted Cavan, "on the Sheraton table, between the bookcases, there is a red, japanned box—and in that box there are certain letters that I've always kept. Interesting letters, mind you—are you sure you wouldn't like a peep at them?"

Alice Faussett made a gesture with one hand of emphatic passionate denial. Speech was beyond her; Browne whistled softly, rubbing his hands in glee.

"Another time perhaps," he suggested, "I assure you they're worth reading. Quite sure you don't feel tempted now? Oh, very well—good night, Lady Faussett. I shall be in my workroom for the next two hours or so, and in case you change your mind, you will find me there."

He went. A few minutes afterwards Lady Faussett, with slow, dragging steps, as if only impelled against her will, made her way into the garden. Moonlight bathed the terrace, the lawn, and made the shadows of the trees still darker. Her hands clasped across her heart, Alice Faussett gazed with wild eyes at what was peace, incarnate peace, all about her, only in her breast there raged a perfect storm of fear and doubt.

She looked at the black softness of the graceful fir. There she had seen the man whom she had taken to be Cavan Browne, and then she thought of Stella and of Gervase, of the young ardent pair whose love was threatened by so sinister a danger. Though she had little pity to spare for anyone save herself, Alice regretted profoundly that those two should be drawn into the web of her tragic life.

She still shirked the question, whether, in order to save herself—to purchase her own safety, she would sacrifice Stella to Cavan Browne. She thought of the lovers, as she wandered aimlessly towards the cliff path; she had intended to go to Cavan Browne, to see whether he really held those letters of which he had spoken, but she shrank from seeing him again, from bearing the torture of his cruel taunts.

The soft thunder of the sea summoned her on, it seemed to be calling on her to rest—to forget all things in its wide arms, to endure no more, to triumph over life by death. But with that definite thought came a sudden revulsion to Alice Faussett. Anything, anything rather than death. She, who loved so passionately the good things of this world, would not voluntarily release her hold upon them.

She turned hastily away—the sea was no longer a friend calling to her, but an enemy from whom she desired to escape. Catching up her long ermine-bordered skirts, she hurried back, pausing for breath near the fir, a subdued sound, as of a cautious footstep on the turf caught her attention. Sharply she looked round. It could scarcely be Stella, for the girl had given her solemn promise that she would see Gervase for five minutes, no more, and though Alice knew that lovers' ideas of punctuality are elastic, she knew that Stella was to be trusted. The footsteps sounded behind the trees, Lady Faussett turned hastily to look; surely Gervase would not be so imprudent as to linger.

As she moved, the footsteps broke into a hurried run, they were no longer cautious, they were making all possible speed. Alice ran also in their direction.

"Who is there?" she called; the only answer was the voice of the sea; the footsteps had died away; Lady Faussett,

with the uncomfortable sensation that she had been followed, hurried back to the house. Once in the pink-and-white drawing-room, her fears left her—the sight of the butler and his attendants placing the customary tray of sandwiches and whisky and seltzer on its usual table acted, in its calm and commonplace matter-of-factness, as a tonic to her overstrung nerves. She felt that she had been silly and hysterical.

"If you please, my lady, Sir Mortimer is taking something in his study, he desired me to tell your ladyship he would not come in."

"Very well, Dibdin. And Miss Gresley—has she gone to her room?"

"Yes, my lady; I saw her myself going up the stairs some time ago."

Alice's relief at the last item of intelligence found utterance in a sigh. Stella was safe from detection, she had kept her word, but, in that event, whose had been those stealthy footsteps that had followed Alice with a vague dread?

She thought with a shiver of Cavan Browne. Had he been following Stella, dogging her path, merely to report to her uncle her transgression of his commands? And Alice's ice-grey eyes were darkened with the rage that swept like a tornado over her soul. She brought her square white teeth upon her firm underlip in almost savage determination.

"It's a battle between us," she thought, "and I must win. I will by any means, only—I want to free Stella. But I'll be the victor; though it's an awful tangle, there must be some way out of it."

With her white chin sunk in the cup of her hands, she pondered on the problem that had been made of her life, that now for five years had glided on in harmonious serenity.

She knew that Cavan Browne was a dangerous enemy; unscrupulous, quick, daring. How much easier it would have been, Alice thought, if only he had wanted money for his silence; she would have submitted to blackmail, she would have purchased honour and ease, remaining Sir Mortimer's honoured wife.

But he wanted what even Alice in her selfishness shrank from helping him to attain. He wanted the sacrifice of Stella's youth and beauty, he wanted to marry whilst she—Alice Faussett—yet lived. It was horrible, unheard of, it made Lady Faussett shrink in hot shame from contemplating such grim cruelty, even if thereby Cavan's lips would be eternally sealed.

There must be another way, and she would discover it. She tried not to think of the letters that he held, the documents that would prove to Sir Mortimer that his secretary spoke the truth. They must be destroyed, but Alice felt that it would be difficult to persuade Browne to part with so valuable a piece of evidence.

Those letters were haunting her as she went at last upstairs to her room; she recalled the wild, fond phrases: they were dictated by a young and innocent heart in the first flush of love; she pictured Sir Mortimer reading them, and writhed in spirit at the thought.

Lady Faussett's way led past Stella's bedroom, and, after an instant's hesitation, she tapped at the door. There was no answer. Lady Faussett knocked again.

"Stella, Stella, are you asleep, dear child, or may I come in for a moment?"

There was a silence, then Stella's voice broke it:

"I'm awake, Aunt Alice, thank you, but I'd rather be left alone, please."

Something in the tones, languid, with a certain dragging intonation, sent a sudden chill of terror through Alice. Softly she turned the handle of the door; it did not yield, the key was turned in the lock.

"Stella," said Lady Faussett imploringly, in a whisper, "I am sure something is wrong. My dear, do let me in, I'm your friend, you know, Stella; I want to help you. You know that, don't you? You trust me?"

Again silence, before Stella's answer came.

"Yes, Aunt Alice, but—but please will you let me be alone to-night?"

"Does that mean, dear, that you'll tell me what's troubling you to-morrow?" asked Alice, now painfully alive to the woe in the voice on the other side of the door. "Does it, Stella?"

"Oh, yes, yes—only please—if I could be alone now."

Sir Mortimer's step, heavy, ponderous, and unmistakable, was audible now as he came slowly up the polished oak staircase, his wife dared not linger there, to be found by him outside Stella's door and lay herself open to odious inquiries and surprise. She fled swiftly, and poor Stella held her breath as her uncle went by lest she should break out into low, heartrending sobs that shook her from head to foot.

Deep peace, after a time, settled down upon Howcroft, a silence that was broken at first only by the squeak of a mouse behind the panelling, only by the note of the nightjar as it flitted outside in the garden from tree to tree.

The tide had gone out, and the sea's music was in the distance—too far off to reach the household, where all, save one, lay sleeping.

As the many clocks boomed forth the hour, there crept down the broad staircase, and through the hall, a woman in a trailing white wrapper, with no shoes upon her delicate arched feet, and in her soul a dread too vast and dim for her to be able to conquer it.

Swiftly and noiselessly with her unshod feet she went—a lighted candle held in her hand, until she reached Cavan Browne's study. Then she paused, staring with affrighted eyes at the door. Suppose it should suddenly open, and

Cavan himself come out? But she quieted such fears with the assurance that he must have gone to bed, all was quiet within.

She moved forward—still listening; it seemed to her that she heard something, a stealthy movement, a rustling, as of paper on the other side of the door. Only the wild beating of her own heart sounded like the roar of the sea in her ears. She could have heard nothing in that quiet room, it was imagination. With sudden boldness she opened the door and entered.

The slumbers of all at Howcroft, whether sound or light, were broken in a strange, weird fashion. Through the whole house, echoing from Cavan Browne's study to the farthest attic, there rang a wild scream, repeated again and again.

CHAPTER THREE.

The Cry in the Night.

THAT the screams seemed to come from one of the rooms that opened on to the terrace or from the terrace itself, the startled household realised, and everyone who had been aroused, including Sir Mortimer, made for Cavan Browne's study, for that door was wide open; the light streamed out into the corridor.

The shrieks had ceased—but the butler, Dibdin, who was the first to cross the threshold, shrank back with a little cry.

"My lady," he exclaimed, and Sir Mortimer, who was close behind, looked over the man's shoulder to behold Alice, a strange, magnificent figure in white, her red hair billowing far below her waist, as she faced with apparent composure the blank astonishment in her husband's eyes.

"Alice," he said, "good Heavens—what are you doing here?"

"I heard cries for help," she said quietly, "and I came down to find out what had happened."

"We all heard the dreadful noise, and rushed down," said the ex-Governor, "without losing any time; how was it you got here before us?"

"I was in the library—looking for a book; I couldn't sleep," she answered tranquilly. Had those who listened to her been less excited it might have struck them that her serenity was abnormal. "I heard the cries—they seemed to come from Mr. Browne's room, and I ran here."

"Well," said Sir Mortimer excitedly, "and what did you find?" Lady Faussett drew a deep breath, her face was utterly expressionless and white as the marble that in her hard composure she resembled.

"I found nothing," she said, and through the little crowd at the door there ran a murmur, a thrill of scared astonishment. Alice Faussett heard it, and she looked at her husband.

"I thought I should find that Mr. Browne had been attacked—that burglars were trying to break in," she said; "but he isn't here"—she swept the neat orderly room with a comprehensive glance—"it—it—seems to have been some night bird."

"A night bird give such screams, but—but, my dear, it's impossible," answered Sir Mortimer rather sharply; "as far as I could judge, being awakened so suddenly from sleep, it sounded like a woman's voice; did it strike you so, Dibdin?"

The butler agreed, guardedly, as one who had not had time to form a very definite opinion, that the voice might have been feminine, but prudently entrenched himself behind the observation that, then again, it might have been that of a man.

There was certainly no doubt, he added, that the voice had been human. This with a covert look at her ladyship, whose suggestion of night birds Dibdin considered puerile.

"Where is Mr. Browne?" inquired Sir Mortimer suddenly; he turned to glance at the servants behind him; his secretary was not there, neither, Sir Mortimer saw, was Stella. They were the only two members of the household whom those wild screams had not brought to the spot. "Where is Mr. Browne?" he repeated imperatively. "Can he have slept through this disturbance?"

"I'll send to see, sir," said Dibdin, with officious zeal, and dispatched one of the men-servants on this errand, whilst Sir Mortimer examined the room solemnly, his wife watching him as she stood close to the window that was open; when her husband came near it, she moved swiftly so that she blocked his way.

"I beg your pardon, Alice," said Sir Mortimer, "but would you kindly let me pass? I should like to examine the terrace for any traces of a possible burglar; it was exceedingly imprudent of Browne to go to bed leaving the window open. One may say that it is a positive invitation to wrongdoers, such carelessness."

Lady Faussett's small white hands clenched themselves as they hung by her side. At that moment, when her whole being was strung to the highest point of tension, when horrible excitement and wild dread gripped her, her husband's laboured, careful phraseology filled her with exasperation.

How could he speak and move and behave in his ordinary fashion when tragedy reigned in the house? How could he dilate on his secretary's thoughtlessness in leaving a window open when, for all he knew, Cavan Browne was beyond all censure or praise for ever? But Sir Mortimer did not know. How long, she wondered, would the knowledge be kept from him?

"Don't go out," she said suddenly, "indeed, I'm sure there's nothing to be found there, what could there be? Whoever tried to rob the house has made away long ago. Don't go, Mortimer, I—I can't bear you to. Suppose that someone should be lurking amongst the bushes, and—and attack you?"

"My dear, you contradict yourself," said Sir Mortimer kindly but with dignity; "first you say that whoever tried to break in has, you are sure, made his escape, and then you declare that he may be hiding, ready to attack me. Stand back, if you please, and let me pass."

He did not see the wild recklessness of the grey eyes that she turned upon him; gently he put her aside, and, at that moment, the footman returned, to announce that Mr. Browne was not in his room, that his bed had not been slept in.

"Then those screams may have been his. The villains

FOOTBALLERS

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attacked him and he may be lying dead in the grounds," cried Sir Mortimer excitedly. He hurried out on to the terrace—followed by the servants. Lady Faussett watched them; she made no attempt to accompany them. Left alone in the room, the rigid composure she had maintained fell from her as though it were a garment. She flung herself on her knees and her hands flew upwards to cover her face.

"Oh, Heaven, have mercy!" she prayed madly. "Have mercy! Whatever I have done—have mercy! It means so much, not only to me, but to those who are innocent and helpless! Oh, be merciful—let to-night be as though it had never been."

It was the prayer of a tortured heart, of a soul that had yet not realised that to suffer is to be purged from sin; yet perhaps it was the most unselfish prayer that Alice Faussett had ever sent up to the throne of Grace, for it held a petition for another as well as for herself.

The utterance of the incoherent, imploring words calmed her. She rose from her knees and looked across the room at the Sheraton table, whereon stood a red japanned box. But it was empty, as Alice Faussett knew full well.

Her very lips were bloodless as she made her way swiftly to the window and went out on to the terrace. She heard the sound of voices below in the gardens, of trampling feet, and she shrank and winced as though with physical pain.

What had they found? she wondered. What ought she to do? Usually quick to decide and rapid in action, she now knew the pangs of uncertainty. She hesitated, looking over the low balustrade at the dark figures that were hurrying to and fro—the servants in search for Cavan Browne, whom Sir Mortimer supposed wounded or dead after an attack from some ruffianly burglar.

With terror Alice Faussett realised that in their search they might discover what must be hidden. She turned and flew down the terrace, away from the searchers, hoping that no one might follow her. She ran down the flight of steps that terminated the terrace and paused beside a clump of bushes, listening. No sound came from it. She drew close and whispered softly, "Stella."

Then the shrubs stirred as though on that utterly windless night a breeze swept through them, and out of their concealment there crept a figure that fell at Lady Faussett's feet. Alice bent over it, raised it in her arms and spoke soft, soothing words, as a mother to a terrified child.

"Stella, my poor child," she murmured, "have you been dreadfully frightened? I couldn't come before. It was as I feared. Your screams roused the house; I don't know how I am to get you in without your being seen."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," Stella whispered, weeping; "but—but Gervase? Is—is he safe? Has he got away? What will happen—if they find him? I tried to think—as I waited here, but I couldn't. Do you think that he has got away?"

"Yes, yes, my child; you don't suppose that Gervase would wait here to be caught?" answered Lady Faussett, faintly impatient. "What is troubling me is how am I to get you back without anyone's being the wiser, or knowing that you ever left the house."

"What does that matter, if Gervase is safe?" answered Stella. Love's selfless devotion made her indifferent to her own fate. "Oh, what an awful night it has been; what should I have done if you hadn't come to help me; Aunt Alice—I can't bear to think of all that might have happened."

"There's no need that you should," said Lady Faussett rather sharply; "we have no time for worrying ourselves. You must be got back to your room without anyone guessing that you ever left it. Don't you see that it would be the very thing to fasten suspicion on Gervase if you were found here? Oh, Stella, you love him, and you want to save him, don't you? Be plucky, then, and don't cry. What good are tears?"

Obediently Stella dried her eyes. She was trembling with fear and cold; she still wore her evening frock, and her fair neck and arms were bare. In the moonlight she looked a child, a creature meant for happiness and laughter, for love and careful cherishing. But already she had learned life's lesson, that all who love must suffer.

"Have—have they found Mr. Browne?" she asked, in a shaking voice. "Oh, Aunt Alice, what will they say when they do?"

"How should I know?" answered Lady Faussett with asperity. "Give me your hand, Stella—there's no one on the terrace; we must simply make a rush for it, and, if we meet anyone, say that you were aroused by the commotion and came downstairs. Only—how were to account for your being still dressed, and not having gone to bed, I don't know."

"As long as Gervase is safe, nothing matters," repeated Stella; it was her one thought; she seemed incapable of grasping any other fact. With her hand in that of the elder woman she sped up the terrace—to where the light streamed through the open window of Cavan Browne's study. As they reached it, a shout went up from the gardens. Stella staggered against her aunt, who flung her arm about her and half-lifted, half-dragged her on.

"Oh, they've found Gervase," Stella cried wildly. "Aunt Alice, I know they have."

"They have not, you're not to stop; every second is of value," Lady Faussett gasped; she did not turn her head in the direction whence had come that shout, she felt Stella hanging back and put forth all her physical strength to force her on. The study was reached—it was empty; Alice Faussett flung open the door leading into the corridor, and saw that no one was there.

"Now is your time," she whispered to Stella; she gave her a little thrust forward; "run, child, run to your own room and stay there. I'll come as soon as I can—to—to let you know—what has happened."

Stella knew that she must obey. One glance of pathetic gratitude she gave Lady Faussett, a glance that spoke of confidence and affection that Alice wished she deserved, and moved by a sudden impulse she bent from her stately height, and, kissing the pale, sweet face:

"It will all come right," she whispered; "Stella—I am sure of it."

"Whether it comes or not, I shall always love Gervase just the same," was Stella's answer, and the very utterance of it seemed to give her fresh strength. She was no longer a coward, a terror-stricken little creature, as she sped swiftly away. The greatest gift in the world was hers, the power to

love and to serve. Whatever the future might hold for her, Stella was to be envied for that great possession, as Lady Faussett knew.

Alice turned back into Cavan Browne's study, and then a cry of horror left her lips, for there, on the threshold of the open window, stood the man for whom Stella was willing to lay down her life itself—Gervase Fenton!

CHAPTER FOUR. The Clue of the Bundle.

WHENEVER Alice Faussett looked back on that night she always wondered at her own presence of mind, at the electrical rapidity with which she had acted.

Even as she met Gervase's gaze, she heard steps on the terrace. Pursuers were after him, in a moment they would be on him; more, as Alice Faussett knew, than Stella's broken heart was at stake. She was beside Fenton in an instant, and with all her force thrust him back, lifting up the heavy folds of the velvet curtain that draped the window and flinging them over him.

There was no time for words, and Fenton made no resistance, nor attempted to resist. Completely hidden, he stood against the wall and listened while Lady Faussett spoke to the man who had followed him. It was one of the footmen who, taken by surprise at seeing her ladyship, stammered out that he had caught sight of one of the burglars, that the man had rushed through the garden and up the terrace; the footman had seen him enter Mr. Browne's study.

"You're mistaken, Chilcote," said Lady Faussett blandly; "no one has come in; I have been here the whole time waiting. I expect the man you saw ran along the terrace. He could get out, you see, by the kitchen garden way."

"If you please, your ladyship, I'm almost sure, so that I could swear it, that I'd seen the man come in here," said Chilcote, respectful but firm. "I was the first to notice him, dodging behind one of the trees, and when I hollered—beg your pardon, my lady, I mean, when I shouted, he started to run, tried to head me off, and at last doubled up the terrace. Is your ladyship sure that he didn't come in?"

"Perfectly," said Alice; "how could I have helped seeing him if he had? As I tell you, he probably ran down the terrace, and you have lost him. He wouldn't be so silly as to try and escape by the house. He would know that it was far too dangerous."

"I beg your pardon, my lady, for having disturbed you," said Chilcote, with outward deference and inward resentment; "I'll just have a look down the terrace, for I'd like to catch him. We've found poor Mr. Browne, your ladyship, near the shrubbery; he'd been dragged there by the marks on the ground. He's been attacked, and it seems his head, my lady, is fair smashed."

Alice was conscious of physical nausea at this description, but she made allowances for the excitement of the moment and a love of picturesque description on Chilcote's part.

"Go and see if you can find any trace of this man you saw," she said; "it's a most terrible thing, and we must all hope that the burglars will be found. Where is Sir Mortimer?"

"Comin' with poor Mr. Browne, my lady," answered Chilcote; "they're bringin' him in, and the doctor's been sent for, not," added the young man with lugubrious satisfaction, "for that he'll do any good. It's too late for him."

"Bringing him in! Not—not this way!" said Lady Faussett alarmed, but Chilcote told her no. They were carrying the secretary through the hall and upstairs to his own room, by Sir Mortimer's orders.

"I see," said Alice slowly; "you can go, Chilcote."

The footman left; Lady Faussett waited until the sound of his footsteps had ceased to be heard, and then she closed the window, and switched off the light.

But for the moonlight the room was in darkness; silently she stole up to the hiding place of Gervase Fenton and drew the curtain. He came forth, and in the pale moonlight she saw him, the handsome, clean-cut face with its ineffably boyish and debonaire expression, that not even the peril in which he stood could dispel.

He was fair, but his complexion was tanned to a deep brown, and his blue eyes were the eyes bequeathed to him by a seafaring ancestry. He stood and looked at Lady Faussett with a faint smile about his firm mouth.

"Gervase, how could you be so absolutely mad?" Alice said reproachfully; "what did you mean by hanging about, as you must have done, instead of getting away at once. I never was more horrified than when I saw you."

"So I know, and I don't wonder," Fenton answered lightly; "indeed, I'm awfully sorry I frightened you, and I don't mind confessing that I was just as badly scared myself when I heard that shout and knew I'd been seen. I bolted—it's the only word that describes it, but—if you hadn't been so absolutely on the spot, Lady Faussett, I should have been caught. You were marvellous."

He spoke almost leisurely, as though there were no reason why in any way he should be harassed or distressed; Alice knew that Gervase Fenton's placidity was not easily ruffled, and, as a rule, she liked the young man's utter absence of restlessness or excitement, but now, when she thought of Stella, his calm attitude appeared callous.

"You don't seem to understand what you've done," she said bitterly. "I can't understand you, Gervase; you've nearly broken Stella's heart, and yet you stand there and smile as though nothing had happened. Don't—don't you grasp what to-night's work means? Did you hear what Chilcote said—that Cavan Browne was dead?"

Fenton's lips tightened; into his blue eyes there came a grimness that was at variance with their usual sunny smile.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I know—Lady Faussett, do you wish me to say that I am sorry that that blackguard's got his deserts, whoever gave them to him?"

Alice Faussett caught helplessly at a chair for support.

"But—but—" she said hysterically, "you killed him."

"I—Heavens and earth, Lady Faussett, what do you mean?"

Hot indignation crimsoned Fenton's face and rung in his voice; Alice felt that, had she not known to the contrary, she would have risked her life upon his innocence. As it was, she felt angry contempt for what she could only regard as a bare-faced attempt at deceiving her.

"It's useless to protest," she said cuttingly, "I know all." "All—?" Gervase made a step towards her. "What is there to know?"

"That you killed Mr. Browne."

Gervase stared at her incredulously.

"You think that?" he said. "Lady Faussett, I only bolted because I knew what a row Sir Mortimer would make if he found me. I wish I'd faced it now. It may mean a fuss in the end. My poor Stella—"

"For Stella's sake," said Lady Faussett resolutely, "I am going to help you, Gervase. You must get away from here—at once, anywhere—it doesn't matter where. What is the use of keeping up this farce of being innocent? When I know the truth—from Stella herself—the quarrel you had with him—everything—do you think I blame you? Not I. He was a bad man, he deserved to die, but—not through you."

Her words poured forth wildly; she was beside him, her hand upon his arm, her grey eyes black in the dead whiteness of her face. Gervase looked down at her dully; his mind could not move beyond the one stupendous fact that Stella deemed him guilty of murder!

"I never killed him," he repeated; "how can she think it?"

"If you did not, who did?" retorted Lady Faussett. "Hark!" She turned with fear towards the door. "Do you hear? They are bringing him in."

Slow and measured there came to those two as they stood motionless, the sound of footsteps, and they listened to the solemn procession moving through the great hall and up the staircase with a grim burden. Alice closed her eyes as though to shut out some awful sight. She felt Gervase's hand close suddenly on hers.

"I never killed him," she heard him whisper hoarsely; "they can't say that I did."

"No one will, if you aren't found here," she answered swiftly. "How much more time are you going to waste, Gervase? Now—that there is no one in the grounds—is your chance. You can go by the private way—past the fir, where I saw you this evening."

"Lady Faussett, you seem bent on saddling me with everything that someone else has done," said Gervase resignedly. "I've never been near those firs to-night; I came up by the kitchen garden, my old way."

"It really doesn't matter whether you were there or not," retorted Lady Faussett; "the thing is—that you must go now."

She moved to the electric switch and turned on the light; as she did so, she heard a noise of footsteps outside in the corridor, and the sound of a peculiar little cough. Gervase and she gazed at one another in dismay; they knew that little cough, it was Sir Mortimer who was drawing close—in another instant he would be upon them. Gervase sprang noiselessly to the door, he would have slipped the bolt, but Alice waved him back.

"No, no," she whispered, "not that. Turn off the light."

He obeyed her; Lady Faussett opened the door, closed it behind her—and came face to face with her husband.

"My dear Alice, I looked for you in your room, and not finding you there, I began to be seriously uneasy," said Sir Mortimer, in great concern. "Do you mean to say that you have been alone all this time in that room? I wondered if it were possible, and came back to see. My child, why did you? It must have been very painful, very distressing. Why did you not go upstairs again? There was not the least necessity for your remaining here, not the slightest!"

"I know, Mortimer, and it was silly of me, but I couldn't bear to stir out; I felt as though there were burglars and all sorts of dreadful things about," she answered, with a pretty shrinking fear that went straight to her husband's heart.

"My poor child, I am afraid that I have neglected you," he said; "but it's a sad business altogether, and all the servants seemed inclined to lose their heads, and were of no service whatsoever. You have not heard—"

But she broke in swiftly; they were making their way towards the great staircase; Sir Mortimer had drawn his wife's arm through his as though she were in need of his support.

"I have heard everything," she remarked; "Chilcote told me; it is dreadful."

"Indeed, indeed it is," said Sir Mortimer, "but it might have been even worse. We must remember that, and also we shall not give up hope of finding the scoundrel who evidently intended to rob this house. But for poor Browne they would have succeeded. I can only feel intensely thankful that there is a chance, just a chance, of his pulling through. My old knowledge of surgery," the ex-Governor added, not without complacency, "stood me in good stead."

Alice stopped suddenly. Until then she had allowed her husband to talk on, scarcely hearing what he said, but his last words caught her attention.

"Do you mean," she said, "that Mr. Browne is not dead?"

"That is what I do mean, my dear child, and also that I hope he will recover. It is very important from the point of view of securing the burglars, as Browne, as soon as he recovers consciousness, will be able to give us a detailed description of them. Something has been found near the spot where poor Browne was discovered that I hope will afford us a clue. I shall place it in the hands of the detective that I shall have down from Scotland Yard. I'll run no risk of local bungling."

"What," asked Alice, "is this clue?"

"A bundle of papers, letters I should imagine that must have been dropped by one of the villains. One was loose and I glanced at it. It is addressed to someone called 'Mito,' said Sir Mortimer; "it might afford, as I said before, a most valuable clue."

Lady Faussett paused; they were half-way up the staircase, and she leaned heavily against the balustrade for support. Her head was turned away, or her husband would have seen—who shall say with what concern and alarm?—that all colour and youth, all its rich, ripe loveliness had deserted it. It was a grey-toned mask of fear.

"Have—have you looked at the papers?" she asked uncertainly. "I mean—examined them?"

"Only the one I mentioned," answered Sir Mortimer. "I have not thought it well. I shall only examine them in the presence of a detective."

Alice Faussett suddenly relaxed her hold upon the balustrade and fell in a swoon into her husband's arms!

(Another long instalment next week.)

Swallows of the Sea

Telling How Fish Migrate in the Autumn Months.

EACH autumn the swift, the swallow, the cuckoo, and scores of other birds which have been spending the summer in Great Britain fly southwards, making for warmer climates.

We know where all these birds go to. The house martin, for instance, that builds its nest in May under the eaves of an Essex farmhouse, will be raising a second brood in November on a mud wall in an Egyptian village; while the cuckoo that laid its egg in a meadow-lark's nest in Epping Forest, will, during our winter, be hunting caterpillars on the banks of the Niger.

Fish, we are aware, have similar habits. But, as the ocean is not transparent like the air, it is difficult and in some cases impossible to follow the travels of the vast shoals which pass from one sea to another.

Whence they come and where they go, and what sense enables them to follow the same unseen tracks year after year is a mystery with which scientists have only lately begun to grapple.

Take the herring. Each autumn countless hordes of these fish appear along our east coast, making their way southwards. By the end of October they reach the Straits of Dover, and, as the season progresses, they pass steadily south-west.

Pennant, the great naturalist, believed that the herring shoals came down to us from the Arctic Ocean. That is a theory which is no longer held, yet no satisfactory explanation has ever been given of what happens to the herrings in spring and early summer. Some believe that they then take to deep water at some distance from the coast, and swim at a considerable depth from the surface.

Strange Shoals That Pass in Forty-eight Hours.

The regularity with which fish migrations occur is very nearly miraculous. One such migration is the occasion of an annual holiday and feast at Samoa.

On a certain day in October there appear off the island tremendous shoals of small but very delicious fish resembling whitebait. The still waters of the lagoon are alive with the tiny creatures. The shoals take about forty-eight hours to pass, then they are gone, and are seen no more until the same day in the following year.

The Mediterranean tunny is almost equally regular in its movements. The Spanish fishermen know to a day when to post the look-out on the high cliffs above the Mediterranean, and the sentries are rarely on duty for more than forty-eight hours before the blue waters foam under the rush of the great silvery monsters.

Then, for two or three days, it is one tremendous killing, and by the end of that time the men have made their living for at least six months to come.

The oily pilchard, that forms the yearly prize of our Cornish fishermen, is not quite so regular in its migrations, but like the herring it appears about the same date, year after year. Like the herring, no one knows where it comes from.

No One Knows Where Salmon Go.

The most valuable prize of the Danube fishing boats is the Danube herring, a fine, fat, oily fish. Twice a year a great shoal appears in the mouth of the river. The first comes in May, the other in October. They run up as far as Giurgevo, a distance of 190 miles, never further.

Why they should enter the muddy Danube no one knows. It is not for spawning purposes. Nor can anyone tell what becomes of the shoals at other times. They are believed to come right up from the Mediterranean. One thing is certain. They do not live in the Black Sea, for, except in the shallows along the coast, the Black sea is almost devoid of fish life.

In the same way, it is not known what becomes of salmon when they take their annual holiday in salt water. They simply vanish into the ocean, and it is very seldom indeed that one is ever caught in a sea-fisherman's net.

Whales travel enormous distances. In eight weeks they have been known to cover over eight thousand miles.

Eels are the most extraordinary fish. Every eel once in its life migrates to the deep ocean, and there, safe below the reach of nets or lines or any other enemies, spawns. There are two annual "runs" of eels—one in April, one in October. Eels always move at night, and, unlike other fish, always swim with the current. Men who net eels on the muddy east coast rivers know exactly when the fish will run, and say that it is always on a moonless night.

HIRING A CHRISTMAS GHOST.

The big stores nowadays undertake to supply anything. Our artist presumes that the "anything" includes even ghosts.



Taking the Census

Some Light on the Big Task of 1911.

ENGLAND and Germany take a census every five years. We are content with one in ten, and next year will see the eleventh decennial census of the United Kingdom being taken.

A modern census means far more than the mere numbering of the people. It implies sorting them out according to their respective occupations, their ages, their homes, and the collection of an enormous mass of detail which has to be afterwards classified by a special staff of two hundred Civil Service clerks.

The arduous nature of their task may be judged by the fact that it took this large staff three years' hard work to complete the census of 1901, and that even when the figures had been condensed they filled no fewer than fifty-six large volumes.

Already the work for taking the census of 1911 on a night at the end of March is well in hand. Twenty clerks have been busy for nearly a year past. The census office is a department of the Registrar-General's office. For the purpose of the census Great Britain is divided into 640 districts, each under a superintendent registrar. Each district is divided into sub-districts, sometimes as many as twelve, and these are again subdivided into enumeration districts, numbering about forty thousand in all.

To each of these enumeration districts an enumerator is appointed. Any person, male or female, between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five, may apply for a position as enumerator, but naturally preference is given to those who are well educated, for though the work is simple enough, yet it is responsible, and requires care and accuracy.

Retained By a Guinea Fee.

Enumerators are paid by the number of names. Each receives a retaining fee of a guinea, and for each hundred persons enumerated after the first four hundred a sum of three and sixpence.

The average earnings of an enumerator are about two guineas. At the last census the total of fees drawn by registrars and enumerators was £91,900. Each census sees an increase in cost.

Early in the new year will begin the printing of the census forms. About ten million will be required, and these will be distributed through the registrars to the enumerators all over the country. There is much to be got ready besides the forms. Thousands of books of instructions are issued, as many as 50,000 enumerators' memorandum books, 60,000 enumerators' application forms and other circulars, and printed matter enough to fill several railway vans.

The enumerator's district is confined to three hundred houses and 1,500 names. He distributes his papers during the last week in March, and collects them again in the first week in April. He then copies all the entries into his book.

The details comprise the name, sex, age, occupation of each person, whether they are married or single, the birthplace of each person, whether blind, deaf, dumb, imbecile, or lunatic, whether more or less than five rooms constitute the dwelling, and in Wales or Scotland whether any person speaks Welsh or Gaelic only.

What They Do At Somerset House.

One other point which the enumerator must notice and fill in is the number of unoccupied houses in his district. In order to encourage registrars to insist upon accurate work, a bonus of sixpence per hundred names was granted at the last census to those who were adjudged to have acquitted themselves well.

When all the reports are compiled the papers are sent to Somerset House, and there the staff already mentioned set to work upon them. They wade deep in floods of figures, and their task is far the most arduous of any connected with the taking of the census.

Tables without end are made out. They have to show how we earn our living, how many of us there are to a family, how many to an acre, and how many to a room.

Aliens are classified; it is shown how many of the populations of towns have migrated thither from the country. The reports and tables are eventually published, and form for the next ten years an index of the whole of the British Isles.

Special Acts of Parliament are passed to provide for the taking of each successive census, and enumerators are authorised to require the information necessary. Persons who give false returns or who refuse to answer are made liable to certain penalties.

In 1851 an attempt was made to obtain religious statistics of Great Britain, but that has been given up.

No Christmas can be complete without the NOVEL MAGAZINE for December, now on sale, price fourpence. It is packed full of seasonable stories.



December's Great Demand for Game Brings Out a New Type of Bird Thief.

EARLY December is an anxious time for the gamekeeper. His employer is bringing down a large house-party for Christmas, and though some will hunt there are certain to be a couple of big shoots. The schoolboys home for their holidays have had to be content with rabbits and wood pigeons. The best of the coverts have been kept sacred for some weeks, ever since, indeed, the autumn battues were over.

There is an unlimited market for game at Christmas-time, and as it is then that the poacher gets his best prices, he is naturally most keen to make his biggest bags.

It is easy, too—much easier than it was in October. Then the trees were still covered with foliage. Now the frosts and gales have stripped the leaves, and the long-tails, roosting in twos and threes on the bare branches, make marks so clear against the night sky that the veriest duffer can pick them out with ease.

What is more, the pheasants, though wilder and stronger on the wing than they were two months ago, seem to sleep more soundly during the long, cold, dark nights of mid-winter.

They are more difficult to disturb, so Master Poacher, with his short-barrelled gun and pigmy cartridges, will often slay a dozen without moving more than a few steps, and then, hastily collecting his spoil, decamp before the watcher who has heard the distant faint reports can possibly reach the spot.

Keepers Fear For Their Lives.

This is the time of year that the big gangs come out from mining and manufacturing towns and work havoc in the coverts. When poachers of this type are about the keeper carries his life in his hand. They are dangerous. Even the ordinary village poacher hurries home when he hears them crashing through the coverts.

As a watcher said recently: "Let anyone interfere with them, and they'll serve him the same as they serve a pheasant." In other words, they think nothing of using their guns on very slight provocation.

The worst of these big gangs is that, even when the keeper has discovered their presence, he can do nothing until he has collected a sufficient force of helpers and farm labourers. And by the time he has got his men together, the gang has gone off with a couple of sacks full of birds.

Some of these town gangs make a speciality of partridges or of grouse. They work with drag nets and don't carry guns. The nets are made of very fine twine or sometimes of silk, and cost a lot of money. If the field is well "bushed"—i.e., protected by thorn branches scattered about it—the poachers are more than likely to lose or destroy their nets in the process of dragging them across the grass.

To avoid this misfortune, they often use an old, slow, steady setter which is worked with a little bull's-eye or small electric lamp hung round its neck. When the dog points, the men working the net make a detour and draw the net up to the face of the dog. In this way they probably bag the whole of the sleeping covey.

These large gangs are regularly organised, and keep a common purse out of which the fines are paid of those who are caught. They are the nightmare of the keeper, for there is no idea of sport about their performances. They are pot-hunters pure and simple, out for slaughter, and in a single night will absolutely ruin large areas of covert so far as sport is concerned.

Snow Helps the Gipsy Poacher.

What is more, once they get away there is no catching them. They come from places twenty or thirty miles distant, and one gang will raid the best coverts in two or three counties.

A December snow gives the gipsy poacher his chance. He can track the hare to its forms, and some of these men are so clever that they will "nobble" a hare with a weighted stick. Snow also makes the woods so light at night that the roosting pheasants are more easily seen, while rabbits never lie so close as they do in snow. It has always been recognised that snow makes it far easier to kill game. Perhaps some P.W. readers are not aware that, up to the passing of the Game Act in 1831, shooting game in snow was absolutely forbidden.

The Christmas holly poachers are a plague to every farmer as well as to the gamekeeper. A moonlight night is their time for working, and they will recklessly destroy a whole hedge in order to get the best berries.

One night just before Christmas last, a farmer living near Ashburton, in Devonshire, was coming home late one evening when he spotted four men at work cutting down holly in one of his fields. Tied to the gate of the field were a horse harnessed to a trap and a saddle horse. He slipped quietly up, untied both horses, jumped into the trap, and drove off as fast as he could while the saddled horse followed.

In order to get back their property, the holly poachers had to pay something more than the value of what they had stolen.

FOOTBALL JINGLES.

AWARDS IN CONTEST No. 9.

THE adventures of "Old Gaffer Noyes" made an excellent contest, and our readers are to be complimented on the clever lines sent in. There is one point. Nearly all the applications are for Association football grounds, and it would appear as though patrons of Rugby football were of opinion that they were debarred from these contests. This, as we have already pointed out, is not so; and we are prepared to send "seasons" for Rugby inclosures should the competitors desire them. In Contest No. 9, the verse which competitors were asked to complete was as follows:

Old Gaffer Noyes
Disliked small boys.
"I'll spoil your game," he cried,
So when their ball
Came o'er his wall

The lines selected as the best, together with the names and addresses of the ten senders, are as follows:

- He "looked" the "foreign hide."
N. BURNS, 18 BROAD QUAY, BRISTOL. Free season ticket for Bristol City football ground.
Their legs with "hose" supplied.
A. S. FOSTER, 26 MAXEY ROAD, PLUMSTEAD. Free season ticket for Woolwich Arsenal football ground.
"Twas "collared" and un-"tied."
ALFRED T. MOSS, 212 ST. THOMAS'S ROAD, DERRY. Free season ticket for Derry County football ground.
The hat came round—outside.
F. W. WRIGHT, 40 CAMBRIDGE ROAD, FORD, DEVONPORT. Free season ticket for Plymouth Argyle football ground.
He stole it. "Ghoul!" they cried.
G. MULLINS, 1 UNION STREET, RYDE, I.W. Free season ticket for Portsmouth football ground.
"Ball-punching" then he tried.
F. WHOLEY, 57 ARKWRIGHT STREET, NOTTINGHAM. Free season ticket for Notts County football ground.
"I'll plant 'leaks' now," he sighed.
ANDREW ROSS, 64 LINKS STREET, KIRKCALDY. Free season ticket for Raith Rovers football ground.
With "tacks" "protection" tried.
J. H. JONOFFLOW, 21 THURSTON LANE, LITTLE HORTON, BRADFORD. Free season ticket for Bradford P.A. football ground.
"Wrecks" off with "buoys" collide.
B. KENNARD, 176 VENNER ROAD, SYDENHAM. Free season ticket for Crystal Palace football ground.
It joined the fire—"side."
M. SANDERSON, 24 RUSHWORTH AVENUE, NOTTINGHAM. Free season ticket for Notts Forest football ground.

10 Football Season Tickets Given Away.

- NO ENTRANCE FEE. -

Again we have pleasure in announcing another Football Jingles contest, for which Ten more Season Tickets for football grounds are offered. The successful competitors, it should be noted, select tickets for whatever ground they desire.

All you are asked to do is to complete the Football Jingle in the form below.

When you have thought of a suitable last line for the unfinished Jingle, which must, of course, rhyme with the third line of the Jingle, write it in the space provided on the entry form below and fill in the name of the football club for whose ground you would like a Season Ticket.

RULES WITH WHICH COMPETITORS MUST COMPLY.

1. All attempts must be forwarded on the printed form below or they will be disqualified. If more than one attempt is made, each must be written on a separate entry form.
2. The envelope containing the coupon or coupons must be addressed to the Editor of "Pearson's Weekly," Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and must be marked "JINGLES ELEVEN" in the top left-hand corner.
3. Attempts must arrive not later than Wednesday, December 8th.
4. The Ten Season Tickets will be awarded to the ten senders of the lines which are considered to be the best by the adjudicators, by whom originality of idea will be taken into consideration.
5. The Editor will accept no responsibility in regard to the loss or non-delivery of any attempt submitted. No correspondence will be entered into in connection with the Competition, and telegrams will be ignored.
6. The published decision is final, and competitors may only enter on this understanding.

FREE ENTRY FORM.

To start our play
Last Saturday,
We asked our Mayor
Frew;
With robes and all
He kicked the ball



I agree to abide by the conditions printed above, and by the decision published in "Pearson's Weekly."

Signed

Address

I should like a season ticket for the

..... Football Ground.



Some Things You Mayn't Do at the Festive Season.

LAST Christmas the Secretary to the Pytchley Hunt impersonated Father Christmas at a treat given to the children of Deene. He was in the act of taking the first present from the tree when the cotton wool which formed his snowy cuffs took fire, and he was badly burned about the hands before the flames could be extinguished.

Accidents of this kind have been frequent in the past in every country where Christmas is kept in the good old-fashioned style, and there is one State which has actually gone so far as to legislate upon the matter.

The legislature of Iowa have decreed that all persons undertaking the rôle of Santa Claus and dressed in character must avoid the use of cotton wool. Asbestos is laid down as the proper substitute both for wig, whiskers, and snowy decorations.

The law was passed as the direct result of a most horrible accident at the town of Des Moines on December 24th, 1906. A cotton wool costume caught fire and a ghastly panic ensued. A score of children fell headlong down a steep flight of stairs and several were killed or fatally injured.

The Quebec legislature have recently amended the Public Holiday Act, and by the amendment have entirely prohibited the sale of liquor in taverns on Christmas Day or upon New Year's Day throughout the Province. Hotel bars will in future remain closed during the whole of these two festivals.

Plum Pudding and Mistletoe Forbidden.

In 1644 Parliament decreed that the 25th of December should be kept as a solemn fast. Plum puddings and mistletoe were utterly forbidden, and an army of long-faced Puritan spies were set to work to enforce this atrocious edict.

They even went further. In 1647 we hear that an ordinary cattle market was held at Canterbury on Christmas Day, and an attempt was made to stop Christmas services in the cathedral. This cruel kill-joy order remained in force for twelve miserable years, and it was not until King Charles II. came back to his own that Christmas once more returned to its former glories and happiness reigned.

There still exist survivors of these miserable people whose natures are so narrow and cruel that they absolutely hate to see others enjoying themselves. At Bergen, in Norway, the authorities have recently passed a resolution restoring the old curfew, and forbidding all persons below the age of twenty-one to be upon the streets after nine at night. No relaxation is to be permitted even on Christmas Day or on other festive occasions.

The postal authorities of the United States have done their best to solemnly strangle Santa Claus. According to an edict issued from headquarters at Washington, Santa Claus does not exist, and therefore all the letters written by small people to the Patron Saint of Christmas must be consigned unopened to the Dead Letter office.

This order came into force just before Christmas last. As it happened, a kindly Brooklyn lady had appointed herself the agent of Father Christmas, and had asked the postmaster of that city to hand over to her all the childish petitions addressed to "Santa Claus, care of Post Office, Brooklyn." For complying with her request the Brooklyn postmaster was severely censured from Washington. He was told that he had violated the sanctity of the Seal, and had set a bad example to the rest of the Service!

The Christmas Box Crime.

The only piece of recent British legislation which has had a direct effect upon Christmas was the Anti-Corruption Bill passed nearly three years ago. All sorts of dismal prophecies were made when this Bill became law. It was said that to give a Christmas box would be a crime in the eye of the law, and that even tipping a porter would bring one within the risk of a heavy fine or imprisonment.

Now that two Christmases have passed since the Prevention of Corruption Bill became law it is easy to see that the result has been good, not harmful. Secret commissions have largely ceased, while the kindly Christmas box flourishes as well as ever. It is worth noticing that long before the Act came into being, many great London firms laid down the sternest restrictions against the secret Christmas box.

The Army and Navy Stores, for instance, issued a declaration which all those desirous of doing business with the Society had to sign. The agreement laid down that the undersigned undertook never at any time to offer any commission, gratuity, or present or to lend money to any employee of the Society or to wife or relative of any employee.

Harrod's Stores had and have similar rules of trading. Some years ago the wholesale traders of Norwich held a meeting at which it was resolved that no Christmas presents or gratuities should be given to employees of customers, and the same steps have been taken at various times in other large towns.



RACHEL IN SEARCH OF EVIL

By HOUGHTON TOWNLEY,

Author of "The Splendid Coward," "Paul Pry Up-to-Date," etc., etc.

RACHEL COMES TO LONDON.

DOUGLAS TERRACE was one of those blotchy, blistered, gramy London streets that have seen many coats of paint, but have fallen on unwashed, undecorated days. Its smug, respectable inhabitants had long since migrated to Suburbia's outer ring in search of shorter leases and purer air; and the present denizens were in the habit of standing at the front doors in their shirt sleeves and allowing their children to play in the plentiful mud of the roadway.

Occasionally a woman, with arms wet from the wash-tub, would come to the pavement and scream the names of her offspring, to be answered by small forms rising reluctantly from the mud-pies. A stream of invective was invariably the reward of those answering to the roll-call.

One lean, hollow-eyed mother had just seized a diminutive and unresponsive offender of five summers, and was dragging it viciously down the street, screeching her rage at its noisy resistance.

"Stop that yellin', will yer? Dy'ear! Stop it, I say. Stop it quick, or I'll fetch yer such a clip across the 'ead as yer won't forget in a hurry. Dy'ear! Stop it!" A sounding smack on the little head followed, and relieved the spleen of the mother.

Rachel Makes a Start.

More frightful cries. More vicious slaps, each harder than the last, provoking a complete refusal of the child to walk, and it hung in the maternal grip.

"If yer don't come on, I'll bash the life out of yer! Take that and . . ."

A clap of thunder seemed to have burst in the woman's ear.

"And you take that!" cried a melodious, ringing voice, clear as a bell and vibrating with passion.

Mrs. Hawkins had received an astounding box on the ear just in time to save the little one from a third onslaught. She staggered aghast, let go the child, and turned a scared face and tingling ear in the direction of the voice, to behold an extremely beautiful, well-dressed girl, robust and strong, with eyes aflame with virtuous indignation and face quivering with passion, standing in front of her, still threatening. This was the person who had committed the assault on Mrs. Hawkins.

"How dare you strike a little child like that? You ought to be whipped. You're not fit to be trusted with the care of helpless things," cried the girl.

"You 'it me!" queried the outraged mother, in amazement and fury, holding her cheek. "You 'it me!"

The girl nodded, but did not quaver, and her eyes pierced holes in the drabbed woman's soul. Mrs. Hawkins was not an instinctive brute. Her violence was more the result of irritation, culminating in violence; and the child did not care very much. But the girl did. The little one stopped its squalling suddenly to gaze at the pretty lady.

"Who are you, I'd like to know, and what right 'ave you to come 'itting me, eh? For two pins I'd . . ." A clenched fist and a careworn skeleton of a face was thrust close to the young lady's nose, but she never flinched. Those fine brown eyes blazed brighter and wider, and the spirit of the crusader shone out with a certain unusual ferocity, giving promise of fine courage. The slapped ear was still stinging.

"If my man was 'ere," blustered the mother weakly—"if my Joe was 'ere—"

"He would probably act as I did. That is, if he is a man?"

"You talk to me?"

"Yes, and if you don't take proper care of that child it will be taken away from you."

The woman snatched it up in defiant alarm.

"Nice sort of lady you are. Talkin' to me! Take my child, would yer? I'd like to see yer do it. Take my child, eh? Who are you, I'd like to know?"

"I am a woman, as you are, but I have a heart."

"Oh, an' I ain't got none, I suppose! I'd like to know 'ow you know! I'd like to know what you'd do with six of 'em, an' one dead and buried last week, and one ill at 'ome, and one lame, and this little 'un always wanderin' out when you're busy, and gettin' run over, and won't come in when she's called."

The neighbours began to fill their doorways all down the street, necks were craning, and the high, shrill protests of the outraged mother brought others of her class to her aid. The story of the affront provoked murmurs of sympathy, and the over-zealous champion was suddenly overcome with girlish self-consciousness and confusion.

"Ketch her one across the 'ead, Martha!" advised another "lidy."

Retreat was the only possible course, and Rachel turned on her heel with

a parting thrust:

"I know where you live, and I shan't forget you." Replies floated on the breeze in unprintable language from a chorus of matrons, who raised their voices higher as the distance between them and the child's champion increased.

But Rachel strode proudly on her way, satisfied that she had begun her mission in good earnest.

She was from the country—from a vicarage, in fact, from a small provincial town that had provided abundant evidence of the frailty of human nature to make her worldly-wise.

Her early life was spent in her father's first parish in the East End of London, where she had seen enough misery and cruelty to satisfy most girls for a lifetime; and she had always burned to avenge the wickedness that was going on around her, and of which the law is powerless to take cognisance.

An Avenging Angel.

She had often yearned for a man's strength to punish transgressors, and for money to champion the cause of the weak. Such a little money would often prevent great tragedies. And, oh, if she had only possessed it sometimes!

Fortune had changed. Money was now hers. The death of her father, almost at the same time as the decease of a rich cousin, left her mistress of a fortune and of her own life. The spirit of adventure was rampant in her veins, and with it the high-souled courage and enterprise of a pioneer.

In London was the field for her work—no beaten track; it abounded in mysterious by-ways and unexplored corners where villainy trod. If she had been a boy she would have been a discoverer of unknown lands; but, being a woman, she could only be an avenging angel, rash and ripe for any enterprise which touched her heart and promised balm to wounded souls.

Of course, she was considered eccentric. All self-constituted champions are; all abnormal people who strike out to do good in untrodden ways are looked at askance by the self-satisfied and indolent.

Rachel had come to London alone at twenty-three, almost in secret, and was settled in a comfortable flat near Baker Street, with no clearly-defined plan, except that the pitiless streets of London, with their wolves and jackals, would provide material for a world of Charity and Adventure.

Life lived under these new conditions would be full of thrilling investigations. Sherlock Holmes himself might envy the power of her money. Wherever evil showed its hydra-head, there would she play the avenger—she a woman. Nothing should stop her.

This was the day of her arrival in London, and Mrs. Hawkins had crossed her path and felt the force of retribution in the shape of a box on the ear. Rachel's mission had begun.

ADVENTURE NO. 1.

"Jack the Pocket-ripper."

RACHEL hurried home to her flat, a charming little corner tenement looking out on a garden where the green remained fresh, despite the smoke of London. The door was opened by a slim, pale girl of about her own age. This was cousin Polly Findon, who shared her home life and acted as companion and housekeeper.

Polly had been leading a dreary existence as companion to an old lady when Rachel came to London on her mission and offered her a very comfortable income to look after their flat. No better arrangement could have been devised, for the girls were devoted to one another, though

often separated for long intervals; and this prospect of living together and working for a common end pleased both.

Perhaps it was the great difference in their characters that made the friendship possible; for Polly was nervous, retiring, and timid, and, though she approved of all Rachel's fine schemes for the redress of evil, was rather frightened when her cousin propounded definite plans, which she declared had the interest and approval of her father's old friend, Inspector Dewey, of Scotland Yard, with whom she had been in correspondence.

The flat was a five-roomed affair, with one large, bright, cosy apartment called the drawing-room, and adjoining it a red dining-room, in which the old oak furniture from the vicarage looked charming.

The kitchen, at the other end of the wide passage given the courtesy title of sitting-hall, was a model of neatness, in which everything was contrived so as to lessen labour, for they kept no servant and only hired a woman by the day for the extra help required.

Economy was not the object, rather privacy and personal comfort; for Polly was never happier than when wearing an apron and busy among her pots and pans preparing a nice little French dinner, an art in which she had much skill. Cooking and housework had become her hobby, and when she fluttered to and fro in their little nest, singing lightly, she spread about her an atmosphere of cheerful home life.

When at last the time came for Rachel to make a real beginning, and she informed her friend that she was going out to catch a thief, Polly at once began to protest; but Rachel held up her finger warningly.

"Not a word, or I shall discharge you. Your department is the home, mine the world outside. You must learn not to be astonished—that is, audibly—at anything I do. To-morrow I am going out hunting thieves."

"Thieves?" gasped Polly. "Hunting thieves? What do you mean?" And her plain, pale little face flushed pink.

"I am going to find the rascals who have been stealing luggage at railway-stations and bringing trouble and misery upon innocent servants. Did you read of that jewel-case stolen from the lady's maid, and the dismissal of the innocent girl and her subsequent arrest?"

In Quest of Luggage Thieves.

Polly forgot all about household affairs, and sat down to listen while the champion of the oppressed waxed eloquent for her benefit. She was an impressionable soul, and was quickly converted to her cousin's way of thinking; indeed, few people could resist Rachel's persuasive tongue.

On the morrow, true to her resolve, Rachel set out upon her first detective work. She walked from the flat to Marylebone Road, where she hailed a "bus" for Paddington. Her full, red lips were hard set and drawn in, and her bright eyes observed everything. Her fellow-passengers came in for a searching detective scrutiny without any result, after which she looked out of the window, with thoughts far away.

She was setting out on a most unpromising expedition, and Inspector Dewey would have laughed at the craziness of the enterprise.

She had read in a morning paper that women were being robbed at the large London railway termini by a clever thief, or gang of thieves, who successfully avoided detection. Three different women had been robbed—one of a valuable jewel-case belonging to her mistress, and two rich women of hand-bags containing money.

As the police were powerless, Rachel was going to take the matter in hand. A quixotic resolve truly; yet that day's enterprise ended in a most exciting adventure.

The Lady in the 'Bus.

The 'bus was full at first, but gradually emptied as it neared Paddington, till only Rachel and a rather well-dressed, fussy person, evidently a stranger to London by her questions to the conductor, remained. The lady looked at her gold watch frequently, fearing that she would lose her train, but found that there was just five minutes to spare. She excused her irritability by explaining her anxiety to Rachel.

"So irritating to lose a train by a minute and see it steaming out," she observed. "One really can't be certain of anything in the London traffic. Better have my cloak-room ticket ready. If the 'bus stops just opposite the entrance I can manage it. I have to collect a parcel, you see. That may— Oh, dear! Where's my purse?"

She fumbled excitedly, but could not find it. With gathering alarm she made a wilder search, patting herself all over, and realising the truth at last in horrified dismay.

"My purse—oh, my purse! It's gone! Conductor, my purse is gone!"

The conductor did not stop the 'bus, but looked upon the floor with no great concern. She had already worried him with many questions common with provincials, and they had provoked his Cockney contempt.

"Oh, dear, dear! My pocket is out. Look!"

"Ah, ma'am, you've run up against a pickpocket!"—

this with self-satisfied conviction, as if he thought himself

When the Yule log brightly burns The wise man to the NOVEL turns,
And in its pages quickly learns What good fiction is.

justified up to the hilt in his previous contempt for a country visitor.

The lady was loud in her protests, and Rachel went pink with vexation to think that here was she on a definite quest for rascality, and the idea of a pickpocket had never occurred to her. A crime had been committed under her very eyes.

"Did the purse contain much money?" she asked.

"Fortunately, no—only a few shillings; but, what is more important, it contained my cloak-room ticket and my return half to Bristol. Oh, dear, dear, whatever shall I do? Conductor, stop the 'bus—stop the 'bus!"

"It ain't any good stopping the 'bus, madam, unless you're goin' back. Who was it sat aside you?"

"I really can't say—whether it was the young man—or the old man—or the widow woman. People change about so."

"Surely you must remember," growled the man rather insolently. "Tain't natural as you should forget who was sittin' next to you!"

"I don't see why you should expect her to notice," interposed Rachel, resentful of the man's manner. "I'm sure I couldn't tell. One looks at the people opposite and sometimes fails to see the person at one's side."

"Stop the 'bus, conductor! I must get back," repeated the flurried lady, almost in tears.

The man pulled the bell, and seemed a little more inclined to be sympathetic. Rachel was only too glad she had sat upon the other side in the far corner, and could not come under suspicion. It was not until Paddington Station was reached, and she got out, that her wife began to work.

What would Sherlock Holmes have done in such a case? she pondered, and stood still.

The lady's purse contained only a few shillings. The stealer would be disappointed. It also contained a cloak-room ticket; that might be useful. Paddington cloak-room!

In a flash of inspiration she saw a possible means of identifying the thief. He might be bold enough to use that cloak-room ticket.

She was inclined to think that the thief was a tall, distinguished "swell" in the 'bus, whom she now remembered to have seen reading a copy of the DAILY EXPRESS spread out wide over his knees, interfering with the bulky lady's vision. If he found that ticket in the purse, he might try to get possession of his victim's luggage—a haul indeed.

To the cloak-room Rachel hurried. Alas! there were two; but she discovered that by standing at the end of departure platform No. 1 she could keep an eye on both from a distance.

Furtive and Sly.

She had scarcely taken up her position before the pale, dark, flashy-looking man came dashing up to the cloak-room on the "arrival" side. He had been smarter than Rachel in divining where the parcel would be found—on the side where the passenger had arrived from Bristol, not on No. 1.

Her heart beat fast. She wanted to cry out "Stop thief!" and seize him on the spot. Guilt was written all over him. His glance was furtive and sly. He pretended to take no notice of the office at first, and then, when no woman was to be seen nearer than Rachel, made a quick rush for the counter, as though in a frightful hurry. Rachel was soon at his side, and for appearance sake took out her purse and began seeking an imaginary ticket in order to come quite close.

The man received the parcel, and she was just about to denounce him, when the folly of her action checked her. What if it were a mere coincidence? The man had dismounted at the other side of the station. He was perhaps going by train. The parcel he claimed was really his, and he might be as innocent of the theft of the purse as herself. Besides, he did not look at all like a needy, suspicious person.

His eyes were all over the place. He looked Rachel up and down, saw her purse—a handsome Russian leather affair with many compartments—in which he caught the glint of gold. He was intent upon his parcel, but a bundle containing a shabby mackintosh and an umbrella was all that the porter produced. An exclamation of disgust escaped the man, and he cried out hurriedly:

"Ah, never mind—never mind! I won't take the things yet; I've some time to wait," and strode away to a convenient distance, evidently watching Rachel.

She paced leisurely up and down, as if waiting for a train, still carrying her purse in her hand, and eventually putting it ostentatiously in her pocket.

"If he's a thief, I may trap him. He has noticed my purse. I saw his eyes glisten, the rascal!"

The man adopted a lounging manner now, and, with hands in the side pockets of his overcoat, shadowed Rachel, who pretended to be utterly unconscious of his existence. He had not noticed her in the far corner of the 'bus.

At Close Quarters.

She purchased a magazine, and seated herself upon one of the wide yellow benches. The book seemed to engross her, for she paid no heed to the thief, who dropped down beside her. Others sauntered up and sat down, and a woman with a bundle compelled Rachel to move nearer to the supposed criminal.

He produced from his pocket a DAILY EXPRESS and spread its ample sheets out wide, until they almost touched her. She was quite sure now that he meant to go for her pocket, and decided to allow him the privilege of being caught red-handed.

The experiment was novel, and she could not control the thumping of her heart, which sent the blood racing to her cheeks. Though desiring to stay still, she jumped up and looked at the clock anxiously. The thief, apparently disappointed, remained indolently where he was, expecting her to depart. She only passed the book-stall, and at a convenient doorway took out her purse and looked inside to see how much money there was.

Only three pounds ten, the key of her flat, some needle-

work aids, and some crumpled receipts. The pocket contained, besides the purse, a very small handkerchief and a neat coil of string carefully saved from a parcel.

Away from the disturbing presence of the creeping thief Rachel's wits began to work. She mastered her fear and nudged her brains for some plan by which she could be quite certain of catching him red-handed. If only she could let him really take her purse, and make sure of the moment of its extraction from her pocket—

An inspiration!

The coil of string could be used to tie it to her dress.

No, that was not quite practical; yet it would be a quaint and triumphant situation if she could manage that, at the actual moment of denouncement, the purse did not pass out of his hand into that of any confederate—she had read of such things—or be thrown on to the line, or vanish utterly.

In the purse was a needlework stiletto, and with this she bored a hole in the leather, through which she passed the string, making a good big knot at the end. This done, she replaced the purse in her pocket, attaching the loose end of the string to her belt.

This was excellent. Her elbow could cover the string, and the moment the man attempted to move away with the prize she would feel the tug, and seize him.

It was a courageous thing for a girl to do, but she was game, and positively boiled with indignation against the mean rascal, who had already plundered one helpless woman that morning.

Watching and Waiting.

She returned with her magazine to her old position on the seat, and sat beside him. His interest revived. He shifted, not very near, but near enough to move closer when an extra person came upon the well-patronised seat, which now was occupied by four others besides herself—an old woman with a basket, a man who looked like a farmer or horse-dealer, a young girl, and a red-faced, ordinary middle-class man, who might have been a commercial traveller weary of railways, for he dozed with his arms folded upon his breast and his chin sunk in his waistcoat.

The busy throng passed to and fro; trains came in and lumbered out again with their human freight.

The copy of the DAILY EXPRESS was once more spread inconveniently wide, and Rachel when not immersed in her magazine was craning her neck to look at the clock, in the opposite direction to the man at her side, as though unconscious of his presence.

She waited, tense and alert, for the tug at her belt.

The thief was uneasy. He folded his paper noisily with one hand, the other apparently buried in his overcoat pocket. He stood up, and there was the faintest pull on the string. It was very neatly done.

Rachel rose now, thereby giving him more latitude of movement. He stepped away, and dragged her with him, much to his astonishment.

She seized him now, clutching him by the lapels of his coat. "You thief! You've got my purse!"

He went white to the lips and looked round wildly.

"Here . . . leave me alone. . . . Take it!"

He thrust it back into her hand, and her fingers closed over the leather. That freed him, and he hurried away; but she rushed after and seized him once more.

"Stop him! He's a thief! He picked my pocket!"

People coming in the other direction out off the man's attempted retreat and crowded round with surprising suddenness. Those on the seat just vacated got up and came round inquisitively, forming a complete ring.

"What's up?" asked a sharp-looking countryman, whom Rachel had also seized in her frantic appeals for aid.

The thief saw that he was in a tight place, and showed wonderfully desperate courage and resource. His smart appearance helped him in the game of bluff to which he resorted with staggering suddenness.

Turning the Tables.

"This woman has stolen my purse," he cried, drawing himself up with mock dignity and pointing an accusing finger at Rachel. "I want to give her in charge. How dare you, woman—how dare you? If I can find a constable—"

She gasped with astonishment at the audacity of it, and for a moment was speechless with astonishment and anger.

"Where's the purse, gal?" demanded the countryman sharply. "Give it up."

"It's false!" she panted, trembling with momentary fright.

"I tell you she's got it. It's in her pocket—in that pocket there. I saw her slip it in. It's a red leather one. Out with it! I don't want to prosecute you, woman. If you'll only give it up quickly I'll let you go."

"Give it up, gal," the countryman urged, mistaking her rage for guilty confusion.

The purse had certainly been slipped out of sight to free her hands; the sudden accusation unnerved her, and for the moment she was uncertain where it really was.

"Give her in charge," cried the old woman with the basket, thrusting herself forward. "I see her sittin' up agin you. I see how close she was. Give her in charge, the hussy! Might have been my purse. Lucky I was sittin' the other side of her. Give her in charge, sir—the brazen hussy! Look at her clothes, too! My word, a pretty beauty pickin' pockets!"

"Oh, let her go, if she denies it!" replied the man grandly, with a wave of his hand, and facing about. "I want no fuss. I'd rather lose the purse than row with a woman of this class in a public place."

"No, no," cried Rachel, seizing him once more. "He's trying to escape. Hold him! Stop him!"

A station official now came up, having heard the altercation from the outside of the crowd, and pushed his way forward with authority.

"Now, then, young woman, what's this? If you've got the gentleman's purse, hand it over. You'll have to, anyway. Where's the police inspector?"

"I've no wish to charge her. Let her go. Out of the way, please."

"You must charge her, sir; it's your duty. Now, then, miss, if you've got the purse, hand it over. No, sir; don't go. I must ask you to stay, if you please."

The ring of people thickened and closed them in securely.

"I have a purse certainly, but it is my own. He tried to steal it, but I got it back, and now he accuses me! The scoundrel! I knew he was picking my pocket. I caught him, and made him give it up."

"If the lady has a purse, she will no doubt produce it and let us see it," said a gentle voice behind. The sleepy commercial traveller had awakened, and was standing close beside the thief.

"Here's the purse, and it's mine—mine!" cried Rachel, producing it, and forgetting all about the string.

"I told you so," cried the thief. "She's got it. That's mine. Did you ever see a woman with a purse like that? It's a man's, and I can tell you what's in it—a latch-key, three sovereigns in gold, and some small change."

"Open it, miss, please!" demanded the station inspector with authority.

By this time a dense crowd had assembled, and the thief, who longed to get away, dared not break through. He was ready to bluff it out until Rachel was arrested, then make a bolt.

"This purse is mine, I tell you!" cried the girl, now almost in tears, but vibrating with indignation. "The key is mine, the gold is mine! He saw what the purse contained at the parcel-office when I held it open."

"It's a gentleman's purse, miss, and I'm afraid you'll have to come along to the station-master."

"Does he mean to suggest that I took it from his pocket?" demanded Rachel, stupefied, and growing whiter in her anger. "If so, how does he account for the knot inside the purse and this piece of string, which attaches it to my belt? If I had just stolen it from his pocket, could I attach it to my belt in a flash? Would it be threaded and tied to me with string? That was why he couldn't get away with it and gave it up."

Rachel Wins.

The thief's eyes looked everywhere but at the inspector, who stared hard and unwaveringly, awaiting further explanation.

"The lady is evidently speaking the truth," said a man in the crowd. "She's proved it. Give the man in charge."

"Yes; if it hadn't been for the string he'd have had it right enough, and been off, too, before she could say Jack Robinson," observed the red-faced man. "I saw the whole thing. I wasn't asleep."

"Here . . . what are you . . . doing?" gasped the thief.

Something cold was clapped on his wrists.

"Come along—no nonsense! I'm Detective-Inspector Dever. I know this lady well; she is Miss Rachel Ransom, but she doesn't recognise me without my moustache. And I know you, too, my fine fellow. You're flashy Weston—Jack the Pocket-ripper. So, now we all know each other, step out. I'll oblige you with a lift in a cab; and if you'll come along too, Miss Ransom, we'll soon settle everything."

Rachel assented with alacrity.

"I've begun in earnest, Polly—I've begun," cried Rachel an hour later, when she burst into the flat, flushed with triumph and with her fine eyes flashing exultantly. "I've caught a thief, and a dangerous one, too—Jack the Pocket-ripper. He's now in the cells."

"Tell me about it—tell me from the very beginning," demanded Polly, dropping into a chair, with her duster clenched in her thin little hands and her eyes wide with curiosity. "Begin at the very beginning and tell me all. It's wonderful!"

(Next week: A Matrimonial Swindle.)

TALKING SHOP.

THEY had been talking at the rate of fully eighteen to the dozen, those two fair young damsels, and the subject of their conversation was, of course, the wise and witty sayings, the charms of manner, and the other admirable traits of character possessed by their respective sweet-hearts.

"Don't you like to have anybody talk shop when they come to see you?" gurgled Mary.

"Indeed I do. Who's been talking shop to you?"

"Oh, Charlie, of course! He's a tram-conductor, you know, and nearly every time he comes to see me he goes on with his shop-talk."

"What does he say?"

"Sit closer, please!"

BROKEN DAWN.

AN, the audience held their breath and simply thr-r-rilled as Jack Braveboy, the hero, killed the last of the savages. He staggered about; he almost fainted with loss of blood.

Then he gazed about him, and suddenly his voice rang out with hope:

"See!" he cried. "The dawn breaks bright upon yon topmost heights!"

The stage remained in darkness.

"See!" he yelled again. "The dawn breaks bright upon yon topmost heights!"

Still darkness reigned.

"The dawn! the dawn!" he screamed, raging about the stage. "It breaks! The dawn!"

A head popped over the mountain top:

"'Old 'ard, guv'nor!" said the head. "Don't be in such a 'urry! Someone's bin an' turned the gas off!"

A NEW GAME FOR CHRISTMAS.

HOW TO PLAY THE NEW GAME.

First of all, cut out the map and paste it on a sheet of cardboard. Then cut out the two little flags at the foot of the page and fasten them to a pin. We are now ready to begin.

The object of the game is to fly from London to the black portion at the top of the map marked Destination.

There are three players in this game; they are the two who take the flags mentioned and an invisible player, whom we call "The Elements," that is, the winds and the storms.

Now take a dice box containing two dice, and let the player with Flag A throw. We will say he throws five, in that case he sticks his little pinned flag five squares towards the Destination. Player with Flag B then throws, and moves forward in the same way.

Now "The Elements" have to throw, or rather one of the players must throw for him. For this throw A must consider himself even numbers and B must be odd numbers. We will say "The Elements" throw the number nine. B, being odd, must go straight BACK nine. If "The Elements" had thrown ten, A would have had to go BACK ten squares. Whatever "The Elements" throw, either A or B has to go back that number of squares.

So on throughout the game; first A throws, then B throws, then "The Elements" throw.

Now on the map you will see Woods, Mountains, Towns, Rivers, and Petrol Depots marked. If, having thrown a number, that number makes you alight on a square occupied by one of these, you have to pay a penalty by going back a certain number of squares.

DESTINATION

SPECIAL RULES.

1.—All moves, other than penalties, must be forward moves, either straight forward or in a slanting direction. No move must be horizontal.

2.—All backward moves must be straight backward only.

3.—On moving into a square containing two penalties, a mountain and a river, for instance, the smaller penalty only need be taken.

4.—If a penalty take a player right down to the sea, he only moves down to the last square on the map. Mouths of rivers must, however, be jumped over.

5.—If a penalty or a throw by "The Elements" take a player on to a mountain, river, etc., he must, of course, continue the penalty. That is, if, after going back for "The Elements," he alights on a mountain, he goes back three more squares, according to the list, and so on until there are no more penalties.

6.—When nearing the destination, any throw which carries the player into the destination or beyond means that he has reached his goal.



PENALTIES.

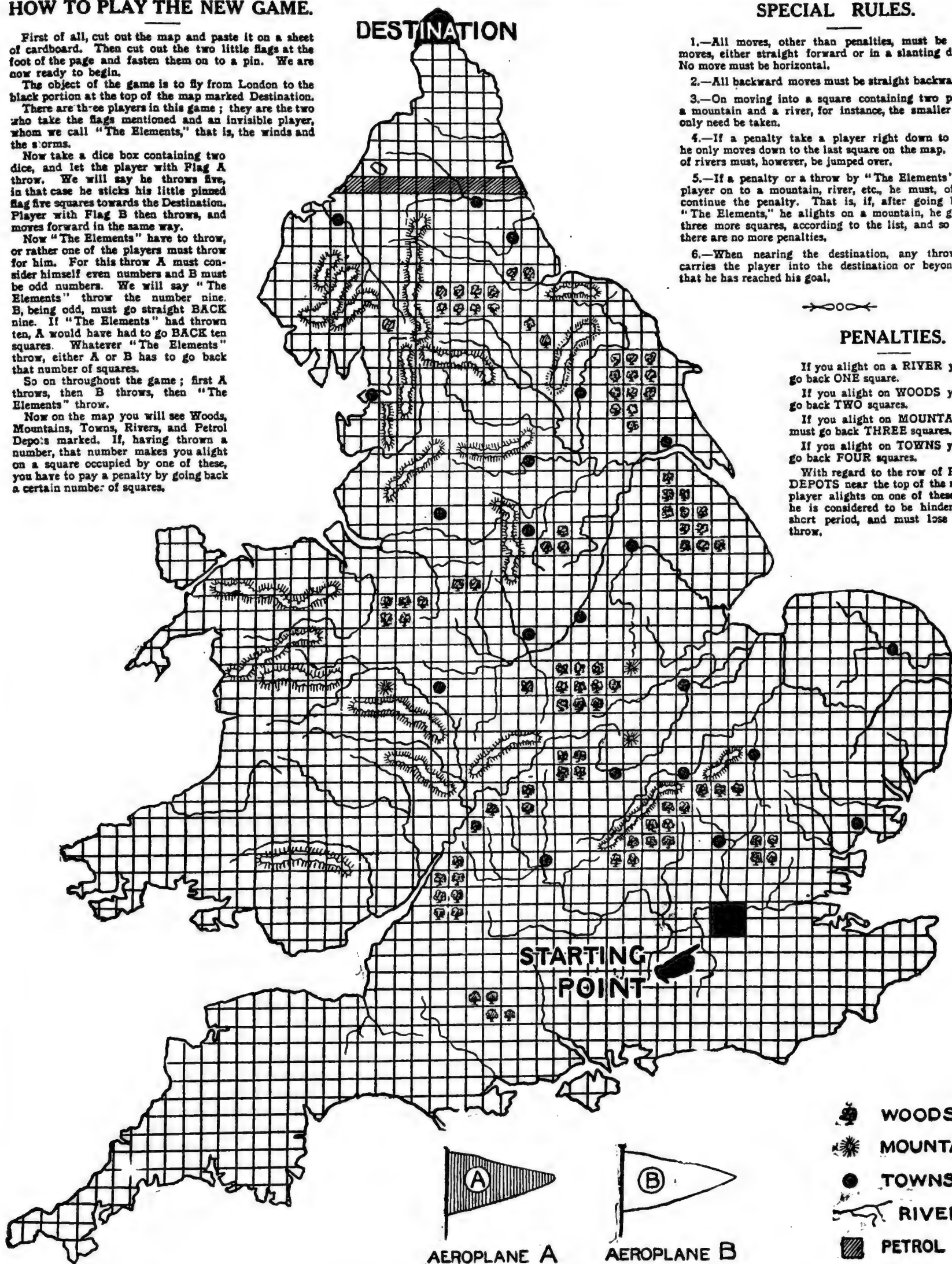
If you alight on a RIVER you must go back ONE square.

If you alight on WOODS you must go back TWO squares.

If you alight on MOUNTAINS you must go back THREE squares.

If you alight on TOWNS you must go back FOUR squares.

With regard to the row of PETROL DEPOTS near the top of the map, if a player alights on one of these squares he is considered to be hindered for a short period, and must lose his next throw.



[In this story, specially told for "Pearson's Weekly" by little Elise Craven, the wonderful ten-year-old child actress, who appeared last winter at the Coliseum at the record salary for a child of £100 a week, and who is returning this Christmas at the same salary, "The Queen of the Fairies," as she is called, relates the strange story of a visit to a land of which probably few grown-up people would ever acknowledge having heard. Little Elise Craven, however, says that she knows she went there because of something which happened to her there which Sir William Treloar, ex-Lord Mayor of London, said, "must have been true."]

The Land of Broken Promises

A Christmas Fairy Story for Children.



Told by
Miss ELISE CRAVEN.

just the most wonderfully-beautiful garden you have ever seen in your life. It was full of most gorgeous flowers and fruit trees laden with luscious fruit. The birds were singing as if it were springtime, and here and there down the paths trooped rows and rows of children, the most beautiful children I have ever seen.

I was just thinking of going up to some of them to ask them to play

WHEN first I heard that I was to receive the simply wonderful, amazingly-wonderful, salary, for a little girl, of £100 a week, I was so excited making plans as to how I should spend the money that I confess that, if it had not been for my parents, on several occasions I should have forgotten all about rehearsals.

You see, before I ever went on the stage, my pocket-money had not been too big—I generally found it too small to buy even half the things that I thought I wanted—so that, I suppose, quite naturally, I kept on writing down "thing after thing" that I intended to buy with some of this wonderful £100 a week, until at last the list became so long that I was afraid there would not be room to get all the things in the house when I had bought them.

Funnily enough, however, although at first I felt as happy as could be in mapping out plans as to how I should spend my share of the £100, yet, after a few days, I got rather tired of doing so, for, at last, I could seem to think of nothing else that even the richest little girl in the world could possibly want, for herself or her parents.

But one day—it was the afternoon after my third appearance as Queen of the Fairies—a voice seemed to whisper in my ear as I sat in the comfortable chair in my dressing-room, just leaning back among the pillows and resting awhile before going out to tea:



"Are you going to spend all the pocket-money on yourself? Aren't you going to give anything away to other children who are very, very poor indeed, perhaps even starving? Aren't you going to help others who want help, oh, so badly?"

My dresser had left the room for a minute, otherwise I am sure I should have accused her of speaking to me in this way, for the voice sounded so distinct in my ear that I almost fancied I could feel the breath of the speaker gently brush across my cheek. But no, there was no one in the room! It must have been my fancy, of course.

Still, all the same, that voice had certainly impressed me, for I answered half to myself, half aloud: "Of course, I am going to help others. Of course I am. But I haven't had time to do anything for anybody else yet. When I get the chance I shall do so at once."

After I had said this, for some strange reason, I felt ever so much happier, and I even hurried with my dressing so that I could go out in the street and see if, on my way to the tea-rooms, I could not meet someone whom I could help.

"Two letters for you, missie," said the stage-door commissionaire as I left the theatre.

I turned around to take them, as he poked his head out of his funny little box, which always reminded me of a rabbit hutch, and, as I eagerly opened them to see what they contained, I bumped up against a ragged little boy who looked about seven—he was so thin, his face was so pinched—though he told me he was fourteen.

"Please, miss, I've been waiting till you come out of the theatre," he said, "because I knew you wouldn't forget to bring the shilling with you to-day that you promised yesterday, and," he added wistfully, "I've only earned twopence all day, miss, through 'olding 'orses 'eads—times is bad you see, miss, and even the poor can't 'elp each other as much as they try to when times is better."

"I'm so sorry," I said hurriedly, for I didn't want the stage door-keeper to hear, "but I had forgotten it."

I thought for a moment that I saw tears come into that boy's eyes. But, of course, I must have been wrong, for boys of fourteen don't cry just because someone has forgotten to bring them a shilling, however poor they may be.

"I don't want it for myself, missie," he said, "but father and mother's out o' work, and me sister's ill, it's mighty cold too—and we've no money to buy coal."

"I'll bring it to-morrow without fail," I said, as I wanted to get away, because a crowd was collecting. "Come here at the same time."

When I got home after the theatre that night, and was just dozing off, I was suddenly awakened again by a voice which whispered in my ear: "You have forgotten to do something to help others twice—it was your promise, you remember—if you forget again you'll have to come with me to be cured in the Land of Broken Promises."

I yawned. Bother that voice—it never came to say nice things to me like other people—it seemed to be made on purpose to be disagreeable to me—bother it, and bother the Land of Broken Promises.

When I arrived at the theatre the next afternoon, for some

strange reason or other there seemed more for me to do than ever. I had to try over some new steps in a dance. Then two ladies were waiting to see me. Three people wanted my autograph. The dressmaker was there to fit me for a new dress in the second act, and the stage-manager wanted to see me to suggest another entrance.

No wonder, therefore, that I forgot the shilling, and a warm shawl, which I have forgotten to tell you about—that I had promised to give to that little boy who, sure enough, was waiting for me with his nose almost glued right up against the stage-door, as I came out after the matinée.

I promised, however, to put things right by offering to give the little boy two shillings the next afternoon. But although the little chap was very grateful he said, as he drew me on one side, "It's mortal cold, miss, without a fire—and my sister has been so looking forward to the cakes I was going to buy out of the change from the coal and wood."

This struck me as rather ungrateful, I must confess, for really, if you come to think about it, there was no reason why I should have given that little boy anything at all—was there? I went away, therefore, rather in a huff, but, all the same, I couldn't help thinking, while I was at tea, about that empty bare room with no fire, and four human beings huddled up against each other for warmth.

This thought made me rather miserable, so I returned to the theatre earlier that evening than usual, for my dressing-room, when the stove was alight, was just the cosiest, snugest little den you could possibly imagine.

"It does look nice," I thought to myself as I threw my Chinchilla coat on to a chair, took off my boots, slipped my toes into a pair of fur-lined slippers, and settled myself in my armchair to wait until my dresser arrived.

I picked up a book. It was a lovely book full of pictures and fairy tales, and all sorts of beautiful things; and in a very few minutes I had forgotten all about theatres and dresses.

Just in the middle of a story which I was enjoying ever so much, however, a voice whispered to me: "I told you that if you forgot to keep your promise to that poor little boy yesterday, you would have to come with me to the Land of Broken Promises, to the land where all who break promises have to go sooner or later."

I threw down my book of a sudden. Yes, it was true—my dressing-room, my dressing-table, with its shiny silver things, my Chinchilla coat which had hung on the arm of a chair in the corner nearest the door, my shoes, my stockings, the theatre, everything had vanished.

I was alone.
And it was, oh, so dark!

For a time I groped my way through the darkness. Not a glimmer of light could I see anywhere; though, from time to time, I heard voices muttering to themselves, "If only I get out of this horrible gloom alive I promise, I promise, I promise I will do better in future. I will never disappoint people again. I will keep every promise, too, that I made before I came to this horrible land. I won't ask to be allowed to start afresh."

Suddenly I stopped. A voice, the same voice that I had heard in my dressing-room at the theatre, whispered in my ear: "Will you help me? I want you to help me to my home. I only live a mile from here."

"Of course I will," I replied, "but I can't see you."
"You will be able to recognise me all in good time," the voice replied.

I said nothing, because I was afraid of the darkness; afraid, too, that the voice was only a trap to lead me on to some land even more unpleasant, more horrible, if possible, than the Land of Broken Promises.

But I was wrong. I had scarcely walked half a dozen steps when suddenly I found myself emerging from the gloom into



The cripple clutched at my arm as the little boy came up.

with me, and to tell me all about this wonderful country, when a voice whispered at my elbow, "Here I am, miss, will you help me home, you know you promised to?"

"Of course I will," I said, as I looked down at the ugliest little cripple you have ever seen in your life—he was simply too hideous for words, with his thin, misshapen limbs, puckered up face, and tiny eyes like gimlet holes. "Of course I will, with the greatest of pleasure—of course I will help you home."—and I bent down and took his arm which was not leaning on a crutch in mine, and started off in the direction he pointed.

We had not gone more than thirty or forty yards, however, when the sweetest little boy I'd ever seen, even in a dream, sidled up to me. "You're a stranger here," he said, "come with me and I will show you what a beautiful land it is."

I looked at the cripple, who clutched at my arm, as the little boy came up, with a grip so firm that he almost hurt me, and though he did not speak, his actions seemed to express more clearly than words that he was trying to say: "Don't leave me. Everyone promises to help me, but no one does." Then I turned to the little boy whose eyes were sparkling over with the joy of life. It would be great fun to go with him. It would be miserable to walk a whole mile with a cripple hanging on one's arm.

So I dropped the cripple's hand, which was resting in mine, and hurried off with my new friend. I had not walked two steps before the beautiful garden vanished. It disappeared so suddenly that it might have been snuffed out by an extinguisher like a burning candle. Everything was dark again. Yes, I was back in that horrible gloom with those mysterious whispering voices, but this time, to my surprise, I, too, was whispering. And horrors! Under my right arm was a crutch. I was limping and hobbling just like an old woman of ninety.

I didn't want to say it a bit. But suddenly I found myself whispering in somebody's ear, "Will you help me? I want you to help me to my home. I only live a mile from here."

A voice promised it would, but when we came to the beautiful garden the owner of the voice behaved just as I had myself behaved yesterday when I broke my promise to help the cripple home because I had an offer to do something which I thought would amuse me more.

And day after day the same thing happened. I, the Queen of the Fairies, who used to dance and receive the applause of crowded houses at every performance, was now a cripple in the Land of Broken Promises. But no one would help me home for more than a few yards if they found they had something better to do.

One day, however, in response to my usual request to be helped home, the voice said to me in the gloom before we reached the garden which led to my home, "Yes, of course I will help you home as far as I can—and all the way home if you are a cripple."

When we reached the garden and I could see who had been speaking to me, I noticed that the owner of the voice was, like myself, a cripple—only even more disabled than I was.

Strangely enough, too, when the other children playing in the garden saw us hobble off together leaning painfully up against each other, and now and again stopping to get our breath, they made no attempt to dissuade my newly-found friend from helping me on my journey.

"You have to appear at the theatre before you go home, don't you?" replied my companion, as he led me off by a side turning, "the theatre is over there."

"But it's no use my going to the theatre now, I'm a cripple, I can't dance," and I was just going to burst into tears when my newly-found friend touched me on the arm and said: "You were a cripple because you broke your promise to others poorer than yourself."

"But why am I not a cripple now, then?" I asked, as I looked around for my crutch, which had suddenly vanished.

"Because to make up for their affliction to some small extent, to every cripple in life is given the power of curing one other cripple. But remember, little Queen of the Fairies," my ugly, misshapen companion added, as he looked up into my face, "a cripple cannot cure another cripple unless he or she has tried to do something to help others. Two days ago, had you been a cripple, I could have done nothing for you."

"I know why," I replied, eager to acknowledge my own shortcomings, "you couldn't have cured me then because I promised to help that little boy at the stage-door—and never kept my promise."

"Yes, that's why," replied my companion, whose face now was transfigured with happiness and sunshine.

"Oh, do tell me more—"

"Tell you more about what?" said my dresser suddenly, as she hurried into the room. But I said nothing in reply.

Indeed, until now I have never told a single soul, not even my father or mother, about my visit to the Land of Broken Promises. But now you, at any rate, know the secret why cripples are always thoughtful of the welfare and happiness of others. I asked Sir William Treloar, who, as all the world knows, is the kindest man in the world to cripples, whether he thought my little dream was true?

"This much at least was true," he replied, "that those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."



A Secretary, of Seventeen Years' Experience, Reveals some Interesting Facts.

HOSPITAL secretaries are commonly supposed to be very quiet gentlemen who dress soberly and who have ordinary intelligence and a good deal of piety.

I do not wish to contradict the common supposition, but I may perhaps be able to offer a few new lights upon a very responsible calling. As one who has had seventeen years' experience, my testimony may not be altogether without interest for the general reader.

There are hospital secretaries and hospital secretaries. I do not wish to write of the little man who is the secretary of the small provincial hospital, but of the man who is the secretary of a big London hospital, where the annual expenditure is anything between £30,000 and £50,000. Think of the figures named; they are important.

When Rich People Die.

A great many special funds are raised from time to time. It may be that £60,000 are needed to save a world-famous picture, or £10,000 are necessary to establish a fund for some most deserving object.

That is all very well; but think of the tax, the burden of raising, year after year, the sum of £30,000 to £50,000. The feat is not accomplished by kindness or by faith, it is raised by enterprise and work and skill.

If a really wide-awake hospital secretary reads in his daily newspaper that a certain wealthy man has died, and that he has left so much money to be divided among charitable institutions, what does he do?

He does not sit down and await developments. Oh dear no! He finds out from Somerset House who are the executors of the will of the deceased and he writes to them, or he calls upon them, and he presses upon them the claims of the institution of which he happens to be the secretary. Many a big haul has been made in that way.

If a hospital secretary who knows his business hears that a Cabinet Minister has decided to distribute £1,000 or more among charities, he does not sit in his office and only think about it and hope that his hospital may be

one of those chosen. He acts. Either he sends a pressing letter or he sends a telegram to the right honourable gentleman, urging the claims of his own institution.

A downright good hospital secretary is a clever stage-manager.

He gets on the right side of the Press, and he knows when to say a thing and how to say it. He must be able to write polite and diplomatic letters by the score, as well as how to address a drawing-room meeting or reprimand a defaulting junior clerk.

Advertisement writing is a very important part of a hospital secretary's duties. So much depends upon the right touch of pathos or tenderness being put down: An advertisement should be deft and well-timed; the mere recital of bald and practical facts is not always enough, so far as advertisement goes in these days.

Then in the purchase of supplies the hospital secretary must exercise, or cause to be exercised, the greatest possible care and economy. If necessary the secretary must approach wholesale traders, rather than have dealings with smaller men. Much contracting for goods for the hospitals is done nowadays, and one or two of the large West-end firms have "hospital departments."

Not so long ago a distinguished Cabinet Minister won a famous law-case and was awarded a sum of money which his counsel stated it was his client's intention to give to some charitable object. To my own certain knowledge at least one London hospital secretary sent a telegram of congratulation to the Cabinet Minister and begged for a share of the "damages" for his own particular institution!

Monotony Never Troubles Him.

A hospital secretary should be up to all sorts of dodges for attracting public attention and interest. It pays to get a large number of little new paragraphs into the daily newspapers, giving the full name of the hospital, and so making the charitable public, as well as the man in the street, familiar with it.

The work of a hospital secretary is anything but monotonous. He never knows what is going to happen next, and he never knows what will be the contents of his daily post-bag. It may be that one of his letters will contain a £1,000 cheque, or it may be that it merely contains a stern criticism from a half-guinea annual subscriber.

Getting money from the public for charity is not unlike fishing. There seems to be a good deal of "luck" about it. Some secretaries appear to be quite unaccountably fortunate, while others, who unquestionably work very hard, are just as unfortunate. Of course, the worthiness of the cause has its effect, but that does not always explain the good or the ill fortune.

PERFECT PEACE.

THE shivering carollers had just selected a pitch beneath a lamp in a back-street, when a small boy emerged from a house opposite and beckoned mysteriously to their leader.

"Mother says you're to sing something loud," he whispered. "That bit about 'Peace on earth' will do fine! She don't want no others. Just you go on hollering 'Peace on earth.'"

For ten minutes the willing minstrels yelled their loudest. Then a little woman, armed with a copper saucepan, appeared upon the scene.

"Thanks!" she said, handing the collector threepence. "That 'Peace on earth' 'as done it beautiful! My ol' man went to fetch the turkey 'e won in a raffle to-night, an' comin' ome, 'e made one or two calls and lost it; so I've jest been a-teachin' 'im to be more careful, an' I didn't want none o' the neighbours to interfere when 'e 'ollered out."

A CERTAIN professor, who was a remarkably fine, well-built man, was staying at a village some time ago. He happened to pass two men carting flour, and overheard this conversation:

"Say, Bill, who's that?"
"That's the professor what's staying here," was Bill's reply. "They say as how he's very learned."
"What a spoilt man," rejoined the other. "I never in all my life see'd such a back for a sack of flour."

MEMORY'S LAPSE.

THE house was in a ferment. Two days before Christmas Mother Humphrey had been put to bed with a sprained ankle, and the Christmas-pudding, still unmixed and unboiled, hung in the balance.

The Humphreys kept no servants, and the children—in tears—were all under ten. Then Father Humphrey came to the rescue.

"Don't yer worrit yerself, mother!" he said. "I'll mix it, an' stop up all night ter boil it!"

Grey and chill the dim December dawn was breaking when the sleepy father lifted the pudding out of the copper and carried it to the pantry.

Next instant there rose a wild, prolonged, and plaintive howl—a cry eloquent of deepest despair and utter abandonment of all hope. Mother Humphrey started up in bed.

"What is it, father?" she screamed. "'Ave yer scalded yerself?"

"No!" yelled Father Humphrey. "I ain't a-scalded meself! But I forgot the lemon-peel, an' the suet, an' eggs, an' treacle, an' spice, an' nutmeg! The puddin's only currants, raisins, and breadcrumbs!"



'Tis true indeed at Christmas time that a feast has many glories,
But what can beat the NOVEL MAG. for a feast of Christmas stories?

COMPLETE SHORT STORY



The Good Fairy.

A Touching Story of a Splendid Sacrifice.

By E. NEWTON-BUNGEY.

THE key turned in the latch at the accustomed hour, and Lassie, as usual, was waiting in the passage to greet her father. But this night he did not catch her up and toss her into the air as was his usual custom, instead he held the little toddler close to him and kissed her.

"My little Lassie," he murmured, "my dear little Lassie."

The evening meal was ready as he entered the cosy little dining-room, and his wife was waiting with a warm smile of welcome on her face. But the smile died away as she saw his expression.

"Jim!" she cried, anxiously, hurrying to his side. "Is anything the matter, dear? You're looking so ill."

James Hewett did not reply immediately. He stared first at the little girl he held in his arms, and then at his wife, a curious strained expression on his face.

"Jim!" his wife cried again, now seriously alarmed.

"I've bad news, dear," he said at length.

"Bad?" she echoed.

"Yes, Hilda, Hobson's have smashed, we've all got notice."

Hobson and Co. was the firm in which Hewett was employed. They were wheat buyers, but they had been so badly hit by the American market that they had become insolvent, the clerks were to be discharged and the business wound up.

"Don't worry, dear," Mrs. Hewett said, putting her arm around his neck, "you will soon get another appointment, and there will always be Mr. Walker's five shillings a week coming in. That will be a little mainstay."

The Hewetts had one more room than they needed in their little house, and they had furnished it cheaply and let it to Stephen Walker, a slightly built man of over threescore years of age.

They saw very little of him, and he proved to be a model lodger, paying his five shillings rent with the utmost regularity every Saturday morning. He kept his bed-sitting room clean and tidy, and always made his own bed, so that Mrs. Hewett did not find much work to do in the room, a fact for which she was grateful.

James Hewett tried desperately hard to find work, but without success. For every vacant post there were scores of applicants.

The savings went at an alarming rate, until the time loomed very near when they would all be gone. What was to be done then neither Hewett nor his wife knew. Both were orphans, without near relations, and their friends were hardly in a position to help maintain them, much as they may have wished to.

Mr. Walker could not help knowing what had happened. Even if he had not noticed the unusual conditions in the household, Lassie's innocent prattle would have told him all. She was in the habit of running up to the lodger's room and staying there for an hour or more at a time while her mother was busy. Mrs. Hewett had apologized to Mr. Walker when she first heard of Lassie's visits, but the lodger anxiously requested her to allow the little maid to come and see him when she wanted to.

"You see I've nothing to do all day," he said, "it's a pleasure to me to have her up here."

He did not add another reason and a stronger one. For a little while, in bygone years, he had had a little maid like Lassie, but he lost her and his girl wife at the same time, thirty years ago.

In little Lassie he seemed to be renewing those long-lost years. Her merry prattle, her large blue eyes, the golden brown curly hair, and her affectionate ways, all brought back a vivid recollection of his own little maid.

"I like it now daddy is at home more," she remarked, gravely, as she sat on the old gentleman's knee. "He takes me out with him sometimes."

For a child only a little over three years of age Lassie spoke unusually clearly and distinctly.

"Where does he take you, Lassie?"

"To a great big room with lots and lots of books and papers, and daddy reads them all, and writes down things. When I'm a big girl I shall do it," she added, nodding her head gravely.

The lodger understood that it was the public library that Jim Hewett visited, and that it was the advertisements he was reading, noting those suitable for him to apply for. A great feeling of compassion seized him as he gazed at Lassie, and then it suddenly occurred to him that her cheeks were paler and thinner than usual.

"Are you hungry, dear?" he asked.

"Well, I am rather," she replied, "though I ought not to be, because too much food is not good for you."

"And who told you that?"

"Father often says so at the table, and then he laughs in a funny sort of way. But I wish he wouldn't do it."

"Why, Lassie?"

"'Cos mother always cries after he's gone."

"Poor souls, poor souls," murmured the old man to himself. Then he gently lifted the little maid to the ground and opened a cupboard, from which he withdrew some milk and oatmeal biscuits and placed on the table.

"Come, Lassie," he said, "let you and me have a meal."

"Oh, yes," she cried, eagerly.

Mr. Walker only made a pretence at eating, but Lassie ate heartily, despite the fact that she was supposed just to have had breakfast.

in, day out, Jim would start out hopeful only to return despondent. And then came a morning when Lassie entered Mr. Walker's room, her pretty face pale, and her eyes red with weeping.

"What's the matter, dearie?" the old man asked.

"They're g-g-going to send me away," Lassie sobbed.

"Send you away, Lassie, why?"

"I d-d-don't know."

The tears poured down the little maid's cheeks until the man's heart ached for her. He sat her on his knee and held her tightly to him.

"Hush, hush," he whispered.

"And I asked the good fairy to keep me at home," Lassie murmured, "but the bad one must have stopped her."

"The good fairy?" repeated the lodger.

"Yes, my mother says that each of us have a good fairy and a bad fairy, Mr. Lawker, so I always ask my good fairy to help me."

"Perhaps she will now, dear," said the old man. "When are you going away?"

"One day next week."

"Poor souls," Walker whispered. "They need the good fairy's help if anyone does."

Presently he succeeded in pacifying Lassie, and she had her usual little meal, whilst he sat and watched her, a strange, indefinable expression in his eyes. He was seeing his own little babe who had died thirty years ago.

Lassie's meals in the lodger's room were not costly, but they necessitated certain economies on Stephen Walker's part. Instead of buying a morning paper he read one in the free library; he cut down his tobacco bill, and instead of his glass of ale with his frugal dinner he drank water.

One morning James Hewett noted the following advertisement:

TO ACCOUNTANTS.—Three pounds a week offered to a steady worker accustomed to keeping accounts. Work to be done at home.—Apply, "R.N.F.," Box 17631.

He applied for the appointment, and was everjoyed to receive the following reply:

11 Moon Street, Leeds.

"DEAR SIR.—With reference to your application for the accountancy work as advertised in the paper, I beg to inform you that I have selected you for the appointment."

"The work will consist of copying entries from ledgers on to ledger-ruled foolscap, and the salary will be three pounds a week, as stated."

"I have written to the references you gave in your letter, and the replies have been satisfactory."

"Two ledgers are on their way to you, and you must commence copying at page one, and work right through in each case. The paper I shall expect you to supply."

"The appointment will date from to-day, and I shall hope to receive the full copy of the first ledger in three weeks' time."

"I am, dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

"R. N. FRANCIS."

"P.S.—I omitted to state that postal orders for three pounds will be forwarded to you each Friday so long as your work satisfies me.—R. N. F."

Jim Hewett could hardly believe his eyes as he read these words. Twice he read through the letter, quivering with mingled excitement and joy. Then he handed it to Hilda, who was eagerly watching him.

"Can it be true?" he cried. "Surely it is not a hoax."

"It seems almost too good to be true," Hilda murmured, tearfully, her eyes misty with tears of gladness.

"If it is—" Hewett paused and drew in a long breath. Then he caught up Lassie in his arms. "You needn't go, my little darling, if it is," he added.

The ledgers arrived in due course. They were rather bulky books, but Hewett estimated that three weeks to copy one book was a very fair average of work.

"It is the good fairy's doings," said Lassie, in grave tones, as she sat in the lodger's room. "I prayed very special to the good fairy every night after I had prayed my prayers."

"And so you won't have to go away, dearie?"

"No, Mr. Lawker, and," she leant confidentially forward, "and daddy does think it is good to eat plenty now."

She paused thoughtfully, and then nodded her little head in a grave fashion.

"I think it's good, too, don't you, Mr. Lawker?"

"Yes, Lassie. So you won't have a little meal with me now?"

"I would like to, Mr. Lawker," replied Lassie, conscious that there was a certain demand on her politeness, "only I do not think that I can hold any more."

Stephen Walker sighed; for, although the cost of the meals had necessitated depriving himself, he had enjoyed watching Lassie's satisfaction as she ate.

"I wonder whether that is why mamma does not cry now when daddy is not there," mused the little maid.

"Don't wonder, Lassie. Come along, let us build the Tower of London."

The old man and the tiny girl sat on the floor with a box of bricks between them, and constructed wonderful

erections, much to Lassie's delight, for it was her privilege to knock them down after they had been duly admired.

Throughout the week Jim Hewett could not get rid of a certain doubt as to whether Saturday would actually bring the three pounds. It seemed to him that, after such long weary waiting, such despair and anxiety, something would sure to go wrong.

Saturday morning came to find Jim and his wife waiting anxiously for the postman. At last came the double knock, and a letter lay on the mat. With trembling fingers Jim tore open the envelope.

"It's there," he cried. "The money's there, Hilda. Thank God, my dear, I was afraid—" he paused and took his wife in his arms.

Three postal orders, each for one pound, were in the envelope, and accompanying them was the following letter:

"11 Moon Street, Leeds.

"Dear Sir.—Inclosed please find postal orders value three pounds, being one week's salary."

"I would like to point out that this work is only temporary, and that you should lose no opportunity of securing another appointment which is likely to be more permanent. There is no prospect of the work ceasing for some time, however, but if you find another berth do not let this work stand in your way."

"I should tell you that the ledger-copying is required for a secret inquiry, and you are forbidden to make any attempt to find out why it is required. Should any such attempt come to my notice, your appointment will be terminated instantly."

"Under the circumstances, I must request you not to speak about the work to anyone.—Yours faithfully,

"R. N. FRANCIS."

"Well, whoever Mr. Francis is, he's a very decent chap," remarked Jim. "I shall certainly keep my eyes open for another job."

But the weeks lengthened into months, and he was still on the ledger-copying, no other appointment having come his way. Each Saturday brought the postal orders for three pounds, and at the end of each third week a ledger with its copy was dispatched to 11 Moon Street, Leeds, whilst other ledgers arrived in due course.

So fifteen months passed by, and during the latter portion of this time Jim Hewett began to worry. He could not expect the work to continue much longer, for he had received several letters containing veiled warnings that it was likely to come to an end.

Then came a great stroke of good fortune. Jim applied, quite on the off chance, for a most excellent appointment, and, to his surprise, he obtained it.

He wrote to Mr. Francis immediately, telling him what had happened, and thanking him from the bottom of his heart for the ledger-copying work. In reply he received a very nice letter, congratulating him on his good fortune.

When Mr. Walker heard of Jim's good luck, a smile of relief crossed his face.

"It's just come in time," he murmured, "little Lassie will be all right now."

Then he examined a private notebook, which contained the following:

£800 bringing in 12s. a week; £200 deducted to help the Hewetts; £600 left, bringing in 9s. a week.

The Hewetts' little knew that the good fairy was the little old man who occupied the tiny room under their roof. They little knew that he had been pinching and scraping along on four shillings a week so that they might live in comfort.

But it was for Lassie's sake that he had done this. The eight hundred pounds represented his share in the provident fund at the Leeds' business, where he had spent his life. At the age of sixty he had been retired, and had managed to live on the twelve shillings a week which his eight hundred pounds brought him.

Then, when the Hewetts came to the end of their resources, he had sacrificed two hundred pounds of his little store. From his old firm he had been able to obtain a number of ancient ledgers, and a friend of his boyhood living at 11 Moon Street had aided him in carrying out the splendid fraud.

"I can't go on any longer now," he murmured, a wan smile crossing his lined face. "I must get a cheaper room somewhere."

Just then Lassie came into the room:

"We're going to move," she cried. "We're going to such a nice house, and I've picked out a lovely room for you."

"That's kind of you, my little dear," the old man said, "but I'm afraid I won't be going with you."

"Then I shan't go," Lassie announced in determined tones. "I shall make father and mother stop here."

"But I couldn't stop here, Lassie."

"Why not?" she demanded, imperiously.

"You wouldn't understand, Lassie. You see—I can't afford to."

Lassie climbed on to his knees and twined her arms about his neck.

"You must stop, please," she said, "'cos I love you."

The old man's eyes filled with tears, and he tried to reply, but his throat was too full.

"You're going with us, Mr. Walker," said a voice.

Hilda Hewett stood in the doorway, she had overheard the conversation.

"Lassie told us how you fed her," she went on, in trembling tones, "and we know what it must have meant to you. We want to repay that kindness, Mr. Walker. There is a room at our new house that we should not have the slightest use for, and we've got furniture for it. The rent will be half a crown a week."

Stephen Walker held out a trembling hand, which Mrs. Hewett grasped.

"Say you'll come," she entreated, her eyes misty. "Lassie wants you, we all want you."

"Thank you, I will come," the old man answered.

The Hewetts never knew who Mr. Francis was, but he is supremely happy now, and he reckons his happiness cheap at the price he paid for it—£200.

As fascinating as Don Q.—and much more beautiful—is Lolita, the alluring Spanish dancer, who is the heroine of K. and Hesketh Prichard's new series of stories in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE. No. 1 in the Double Xmas Number—now on sale.



Mr. "P. Doubleyou" Gathers some Special Information Concerning the Mammoth Tree Annually Erected at the Crystal Palace.

NEVER less than sixty, often over eighty, feet in height, the great Christmas-tree annually erected in the Crystal Palace is the biggest thing of its kind in the world.

In search of an article about this mammoth tree, I went to the Crystal Palace, to be most kindly received by the genial and astute general manager, Mr. George O. Starr, and by him was introduced to the "men of the Christmas-tree," namely, Mr. Castleton (who is responsible for bringing the tree to the Palace and erecting it) and Mr. Bool, who superintends the "dressing" of the tree as he also does the general decoration of the Palace on special occasions.

"The Palace has had a Christmas-tree for nearly forty years, and for the last ten it has been my duty to fetch in the tree," said Mr. Castleton. "I don't know where the first trees came from, but for many years they were provided by the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Benson, from his estate at Addington Park.

"When the Archbishop died in 1896, however, Addington Park was sold, and we were at a loss for a tree. Sir Jeremiah Colman, of the great mustard firm, stepped into the breach, and since then the trees have come from his country seat at Gatton, near Reigate.

"It's an all day job fetching in the tree, for we leave the Palace at six in the morning, and it is usually seven or so in the evening before the big trolley, drawn by four sturdy horses, pulling in single file, arrives at the goods' entrance to the C.P.

"Arrived at Gatton we pick our tree—spruce, the tree is—then what we call 'grub' the roots (that is, loosen them), and next, by means of guy-ropes we pull the tree over, so that it falls on the trolley with the root pointing out over the horses' heads, though, of course, the horses are taken out while this is being done. Then we cut off the roots and start on our homeward journey, the actual capture of the tree taking, as a rule, about three hours. Ever had any accidents? No, though I remember a comical little incident which happened one year as we were returning through Croydon.

"The tree, you will understand, projects a long way in front of and behind the trolley, and, coming to a corner where some men were working at drains, we warned them to stand back. They thought they knew better than we did, stood their ground, and the tail of the tree swept them like so many nippins into their ditch. However, as we had warned them, they could not do anything but laugh.

"Of late years the tree has been placed in a big tub, but, as a matter of fact, the tree goes through the floor, a plank or two being taken up to admit of this, and it is securely guyed and fastened underneath. Has the tree ever toppled over? Oh, no, it is made absolutely secure by means of ropes stretching from it to various girders. I think that's all I have to say about my share of work with the tree. Perhaps I'll live to bring it to the Palace on an aeroplane? Perhaps! At present four horses and a trolley are good enough for me."

"It takes a week to decorate the tree," said Mr. Bool. "There are between 3,000 and 4,000 toys and gifts to be stuck on it, to say nothing of dozens and dozens of glass balls, lanterns, trimmings, garlands, banners, flags, and so on. Why, for the 'snow' alone six bales of wool are used, and hundreds of yards of wire and string are used for fastening purposes.

"How is the decoration carried out? Well, I have one, two, or three men working in mid-air from what we call a 'gantling seat'—a sort of travelling air-trolley, such as is used by house-decorators and suchlike. A windlass arrangement enables us to raise or lower the seat as we like, while a guide rope attachment helps us to pull the staging round the tree as required. But, there, I see you have a photograph of the tree while being 'dressed,' and that will show your readers just how it is done.

"Have I any hints to give on dressing a Christmas-tree? Oh, I don't know; I have been so long at the job that I don't take much notice of how I go to work. But, of course, you should always begin at the top and work downwards, and for branches you should work outwards, that is, if you are going to have several toys on one branch put in the inner ones first.

"Fixing Father Christmas right at the top of our tree is rather a ticklish job, and so it is with any tree, big or small, for the weight of the figure is apt to bend the tree over. The best plan is to fasten Father Christmas on

to a separate piece of stick or cane running down and spliced to the tree itself, or you can 'guy' him with rope or string attached to some convenient object.

"Heavy toys should, of course, be kept for the lower branches of the tree. For fastening on the things fine wire is much better than string, for with wire there is no need for knotting, a simple twist being all that is needed.

"Ever had any accidents through lanterns catching fire? No, for the very good reason that, although we have plenty of lanterns on the tree, we never light them. The risk would be far too great. What is the safest place for lighted lanterns or candles on a Christmas-tree? There is no safe place; and people who allow lights on Christmas-trees are criminally foolish. The toys, trimmings, and often the tree itself are highly inflammable, and then there is the very serious risk of children dancing round a tree, or investigating its treasures, catching fire from a lantern or candle. No, lights should never be allowed on a Christmas-tree.

"Yes, it takes a week to 'dress' the Palace tree, and it is a long job, too, undressing it, for the gantling seat has to be requisitioned again, and every single article has to be taken off by hand. There is no other way of doing it."



This picture is taken from an actual photograph of the biggest Christmas tree in the world. Note the air-trolley on which the dressers are working. The two men standing below give some idea of the size of the tree.

"The Crystal Palace gives the toys free," said Mr. Starr in the course of a final word; "and I can only say that if it pleases the children to get them, it is a sincere pleasure to us to see and make them happy. The first distribution is made on Boxing Day, and afterwards, twice daily, we distribute the toys among the children in the circus audience. So long as the tree lasts, which is five weeks, every child coming to the Palace circus gets a toy.

"I am an old showman, and have seen many wonderful things, but you may take it from me that the Crystal Palace Christmas-tree is the biggest and most wonderful thing on earth of its kind."

PUNISHMENT.

WHILST making his usual daily inspection of the stables the Major noticed Private Jones giving his horse a piece of lump sugar.

"I am very pleased to see you kind to your horse, Private Jones," he said; "it shows that you regard him with the true spirit, and I will not forget you for it."

Private Jones waited until his commanding officer was out of earshot, and then turned to his neighbour.

"I wasn't bein' kind to him," he said. "The beast threw me off this morning, and I am tryin' to give him the toothache."



Telling how Crops are Saved from Birds and Beasts.

In a well-kept orchard you will frequently see the trunk of each tree neatly lime-washed. This is done for the purpose of keeping slugs, snails, and other pestilential insects from climbing up and damaging the leaves or fruit, or from burrowing into the bark.

Australian fruit-growers suffer severely from the rabbit plague. The hungry rodents bark the young trees, and by girdling them kill them. It has been found that mutton fat smeared upon the stems will keep these pests at a distance. Mutton fat is cheap in Australia. In this country the expense would make it impossible to employ such a remedy. Yet here as well as in Australia the ever-increasing hordes of rabbits do great damage in plantations.

The best remedy that has so far been discovered is to cut furze and bind it with rope-yarn around the trees. The boughs are placed head downwards, beginning from the bottom, and working up. This will save the trees not only from rabbits, but from sheep, and is a plan widely adopted in Kent and in Worcestershire, where sheep are grazed in the orchards.

Parliament and the Rabbits.

In days before Sir William Harcourt's "Hares and Rabbits" Bill, rabbits belonged solely to the landlord. Since farmers have had a right to the rabbit shooting, conies have rapidly increased, so much so that in 1900, when the Land Tenure Bill came in, a Parliamentary Committee seriously discussed the question as to whether the rabbit should not be exterminated.

There is no manner of doubt that the damage they do to growing wheat and barley, to clover and to grass lands, as well as to young plantations, is simply enormous. They are responsible for the yearly purchase of thousands of pounds' worth of wire netting. In most places gardening is impossible unless the whole garden is carefully netted in.

These islands are too heavily populated ever to suffer from rabbits like Australia or New Zealand. There, as every one knows, the plague of rabbits has cost colonists not thousands but millions of pounds. Trapping, poisoning, and shooting have all proved useless to keep down the ever-increasing hordes, and of late years experiments have been tried with germs of various diseases.

A brew of two gallons of broth infected with microbes of the chicken cholera mixed with coarse flour will destroy at least twenty thousand rabbits, and the beauty of this method of destruction is that horses, cows, pigs, dogs, and human beings are all immune from the attacks of this particular disease.

America's Little Way.

In America the rabbit never becomes a plague. But its place is taken by a sort of hare commonly known as the jack rabbit. These creatures multiply enormously, and eat great areas of pasture quite bare. When a district becomes infested with jack rabbits the farmers organise a "drive." A great V-shaped inclosure is made with wire netting with a circular pound at the apex. Then an army of drivers afoot or on horseback sweep the country, and closing in towards the centre drive the rabbits before them.

In March, 1906, there was a big drive of this kind in Fresno County, California. Eight thousand people attended, and the line was eighteen miles long. Nearly 21,000 jack rabbits were driven into the corral and killed.

About the same time Western Nebraska suffered from a plague of those little marmots which they call prairie dogs. Near Rushville were nine "towns" of prairie dogs, covering an area of 3,500 acres. The farmers tried all manner of poisons, but could do nothing until they hit upon using carbon bisulphide, a poisonous gas which is forced into the burrows, and one whiff of which instantly finishes poor prairie dog.

Training Terriers to Catch Moles.

Moles are increasing very fast in many parts of England. On a Devonshire farm a professional trapper recently killed 420 in a week. Near Guildford whole fields have been turned up, and there the farmers are training terriers to watch for the little tunnellers, and snap them as they come near the surface. It is the female moles that do most of the surface burrowing.

There are fifty-six million acres under cultivation in the Kingdom, and if you place the rat population at only one per acre the total becomes a formidable one. Each rat does at least a pounds' worth of damage per year. Last year there was started the "Society for the Destruction of Vermin," which gives prizes to the clubs killing most rats. In Denmark, where a price is paid by Government for every dead rat delivered to the local authorities, there were killed last year 1,398,090 rats.

Our rat clubs aim also at thinning out the ever-increasing hordes of sparrows. Market gardeners attempt to keep sparrows off their crops by tying threads across the beds. It has been found that the sparrow does not mind white thread, presumably because he can see it easily. Black thread entanglements will, however, keep him away. No doubt he suspects the dark strands of being traps.

"Take my pudding, take my goose," began the frightened man to grovel.
"But oh! Kind mister footpad, spare my Christmas NOVEL."



Mr. Chorley attends the same party as his old friend Mr. Wimbleby, and they have some exciting adventures.

Related by
ARNOLD GOLSWORTHY.

CHORLEY, having tired of London, had gone back to his old home; and he was out in his garden sweeping up the remains of the autumn leaves, when Mr. Wimbleby's head suddenly appeared over the hedge that divided his ground from Chorley's.

"Hallo, Wimbleby, old chap!" said Chorley pleasantly. "What's the news?"

"Why," replied Wimbleby, with a sour look, "I hear that the Thompsons have invited you to their Christmas dinner-party. I didn't know about it till I had accepted the invitation for myself, or else I shouldn't have gone. As it is, I can only say I hope you'll behave yourself."

"That's very kind of you, Wimbleby, old chap!" returned Chorley. "And as we're so keen after each other's welfare, I should like to express the hope that you'll turn up sober."

Wimbleby growled out an uncomplimentary reference to Chorley's mental condition, and disappeared; while Chorley himself went on sweeping with unruffled calm.

The Thompsons lived in a flat in Battersea Park, somewhere near the roof. Mr. Wimbleby arrived in a rather bad temper. He had not been given a hint that the function was to be a dress affair, and he had turned up in a lounge-suit to find himself the only gentleman present who was not in evening clothes.

While the company were taking their places in the dining-room it occurred to Chorley that a little humour would make the proceedings seem less formal and supply a topic for conversation, which is always difficult to start at such times. On his way round to his place, therefore, he adroitly picked up a couple of the gold-plated salt-spoons from the table and dropped them, unnoticed, into one of Wimbleby's capacious pockets.

The spoons were missed very quickly. Mrs. Thompson, who, as ladies usually do on such occasions, wore an air of quiet queenly dignity, called to one of the maids and wanted to know how it was that sufficient salt-spoons had not been put on the table. The maid protested that the spoons were there a moment ago.

"Mr. Wimbleby suffers a good deal from absence of mind," Chorley volunteered to his hostess. "Perhaps he—"

"I beg your pardon, Chorley!" said Wimbleby, speaking in haste. "You'll kindly behave yourself, if you please. The last thing that I should—"

Wimbleby cut his protest short, and his face fell. He had put his hand mechanically into his pocket, and could not conceal from himself the dismal fact that the missing spoons were there. He laid them on the table before him with a crestfallen air, and blushed a vivid pink.

"It's only fair that I should explain, Mrs. Thompson," said Chorley, "that I dropped those spoons into Wimbleby's pocket for a lark. Ha! ha! ha!"

As it happened, Chorley had a monopoly of the laughter. Mrs. Thompson did not seem to be able to appreciate the joke. She looked sternly at Chorley, while all the other guests stared straight in front of them and maintained a chilling silence.

By the time the ladies were starting for the drawing-room, however, Chorley had rehabilitated himself; and when the men were left alone they laughed at Chorley's stories every time, while no one seemed to be able to see the joke in anything that Wimbleby said. Naturally

enough, this did not sweeten Wimbleby's temper, and after a while he was left to himself in a corner brooding over his wrongs. He was also occupied in thinking how he could get even with Chorley.

His chance came when the men went to join the ladies. Wimbleby led the way from the room and



Mr. Wimbleby turned up in a lounge-suit to find himself the only gentleman who was not in evening clothes.

waited on the threshold. As Chorley came out Wimbleby stopped him a moment, and then, Chorley, being taken off his guard, was smartly pushed back into the dining-room again, while Wimbleby promptly turned the key on him. Wimbleby then made a point of asking the servants not to go into the dining-room too soon, as he wanted to give Chorley a chance to feel his position more acutely.

As a matter of fact, Chorley was rather nonplussed for the moment. He could hardly hammer at the door and ask to be let out, because he did not want to spoil the party; and, besides, he wanted to show Wimbleby that he could take a joke like a good sportsman as well as anyone. He therefore turned his attention to the window. It was too far from the ground to permit of Chorley lowering himself to the ground; but, on the other hand, there

was a verandah running the whole length of the block of flats, and it occurred to Chorley that if he could climb over the little barrier between one flat and another, he could tap at the adjoining window and apologetically ask the people there to let him pass through their flat.

In a moment Chorley was acting on the idea. He walked out on the verandah, and having climbed the partition with some effort, tapped gently at a window, at which he could see a light shining through the blind. To his great delight he heard the window being opened; but he was less pleased when a strong hand reached out and grabbed him by the coat collar and dragged him into the room. As soon as he could turn his head he observed that his assailant was a brawny policeman, from whose lamp had come the light he had just seen.

"Pon my word!" said the policeman derisively. "Nice thing for a chap at your time o' life to be playing the gentleman-burglar, ain't it? I've been waiting here three nights for you, my boy!"

"Rubbish!" said Chorley. "You're talking nonsense. I'm one of the guests at the dinner-party next door."

A strong hand reached out and grabbed Chorley by the coat collar.



Someone looked me in the dining-room for a silly joke, and I thought I'd ask if I might be allowed to get out this way. Come with me and see if that's not right."

The story seemed plausible enough, and the policeman therefore called to his mate, and the two of them, holding Chorley tightly between them, descended to the street and mounted again to Mrs. Thompson's flat. As it happened, Wimbleby had just decided to come out of the drawing-room and release Chorley, and he was in the passage when the bell rang. He therefore took it on himself to answer the door.

"Hallo, Wimbleby!" said Chorley; "there you are. You might just explain to these people who I am."

"I beg your pardon!" said Wimbleby in a haughty tone, seeing his chance of getting even.

"Gentleman says he belongs here, sir," said the policeman who had first taken Chorley in hand. "Said you'd recognise him."

"Some mistake, somewhere," said Wimbleby, with a scornful smile. "I should say he's been getting at you. Better take him away to the nearest lock-up."

"Oh, come, I say, Wimbleby!" said Chorley, "this is carrying a joke rather too far. I shall call Mrs. Thompson."

"What is it, constable?" asked Wimbleby, wishing to make the most of his triumph; "burglary or murder? Your man seems capable of either, or both."

"Bad case of burglary, sir. Sorry to have troubled you. I might have known he was fooling us." And then he gripped Chorley again, and said gruffly: "Now you come along quietly, or else we'll frog's-march you!"

Fortunately for Chorley, Mrs. Thompson, hearing an altercation in the hall, came out to see what the matter was, and Chorley was, of course, at once identified and released.

For some time after that the feeling between Chorley and Wimbleby was noticeably strained, though, of course, for the sake of the other guests, they restrained their feelings as far as possible. When the company had settled down again after lamenting Chorley's absence, there was a little music.

Wimbleby had to express regret that he could neither play nor sing, and Chorley saw that he had got another chance to score. He said he had brought a selection of comic songs with him, and in due course he gave one of them in his best style.

At the close of the song there was some applause, several of the guests even admitting that it was funny. Wimbleby, however, sat on his chair pretending to weep silently, as he explained to one of the other guests that Mr. Chorley's comic singing always made him feel so sad.

Chorley happened to overhear the remark, and he observed in an audible whisper to the gentleman who sat next to him:

"Poor old Wimbleby! I told them it would be a thousand pities if they let him sit too near the whisky decanter. I knew he'd go and overdo it!"

Wimbleby scowled as he heard the remark; but he said nothing at the moment. Presently one of the guests announced that it was snowing hard outside, and Chorley remarked that that was rather unfortunate, as he and Mr. Wimbleby had got a mile to walk from the station at the other end of the journey home.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Chorley," said Wimbleby, "but you had better keep your sympathy for yourself. I'm all right. I've ordered a fly to meet me at the station."

"Perhaps we could share it, in that case?" suggested Chorley.

"I think not, thank you," replied Wimbleby in a haughty tone. "I've had enough of you."

Chorley shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing more, but took to thinking hard instead. Somewhere about midnight the party broke up. As Chorley did not wish to risk having to walk even to Battersea Park station with Wimbleby, although it was only a few yards away, he departed a little in advance, assuring his hostess that he had had a most delightful evening.

Chorley's anxiety was not so much to be in plenty of time for the train as to have a couple of minutes or so at the telephone box. It was worth twopence to be able to telephone to the cab-office at his local station and to ask them to kindly cancel the order for a cab for Mr. Wimbleby as it would not now be required. At the same time he asked them to be so good as to send a cab for Mr. Chorley instead.

Chorley saw Wimbleby hurry into the train at Battersea Park at the last moment, and they alighted almost together at their little station fifteen miles down the line. Wimbleby brushed past Chorley with a fine swagger, and smiled grimly as he saw the snow coming down outside. He walked up to the cab that was waiting at the door, and said in a voice loud enough for Chorley to hear:

"Mr. Wimbleby's cab, I think."

"No, sir," replied the cabman abruptly. "That's not the name I was told."

"Oh!" said Wimbleby, a little irritably, "you've probably gone and bungled it as usual. That was the name right enough, because I ordered the cab myself, and you didn't understand."

"You'll excuse me, guv'nor," replied the cabman, who resented this aspersions on his knowledge of his business, "but this ain't your cab, and—"

At this moment Chorley intervened.

"Ah, cabby, there you are!" he said, with a cheery smile. "Mr. Chorley's cab, I think."

"Right you are, sir!" replied the cabby. "Pretty rough night, ain't it?"

Chorley gave a little chuckle and got into the cab, carefully closing the door behind him as he watched Wimbleby standing there almost speechless with rage.

"Right away, driver!" said Chorley. "I'm sorry for anyone who's got to walk far on a night like this."

Wimbleby, who had been muttering to himself, suddenly called after Chorley:

"I say, Chorley, old chap!" he whined. "Couldn't we share the cab just for once?"

Chorley stopped the vehicle and put his head out of the window. "I'm afraid I've had about as much of you as I can stand for one evening, Mr. Wimbleby!" he said.

"But, hang it all, man, I've no umbrella, and I shall get drenched to the skin!"

"Well," said Chorley, "seeing that it's Christmas-time, and the season of peace and goodwill, I'll meet you this once. If you'll agree to pay the fare and give the cabman a shilling for himself, you shall come in. But I hope you'll try and lead a better life for the future."

And Wimbleby, having no alternative, growled his assent and scrambled in, and the cab drove off.



"Now come along quietly," said the two policeman, "or else we'll frog's-march you."

Who's who in "Spookland"

Being the Strange Experiences of the Sub-Editor when in search of a novel idea for the Christmas Number.

"We must have something novel," mused the Sub-Editor, as he sat at home before a cosy fire with pipe in his mouth, and turned the contents of the Christmas number over in his mind.

"Certainly," said a voice in his ear. "Hullo, who are you?" exclaimed the Sub-Editor, wheeling round, and finding to his astonishment a faultlessly-attired gentleman, whose neat moustache and trim-pointed beard gave him a Mephistophelean look. "Well, sir, I'm the Phantom. People are rude enough to say of me that I don't exist. But here I am, you see."

"Yes; but what do you want here?" "Ah, I happened to be passing and overheard you say you wanted something novel for your Christmas number."



"Hullo, who are you?" exclaimed the Sub-Editor wheeling round.

The idea of a scoop in spooks suddenly flashed through the Sub-Editor's mind. "Certainly!" he eagerly cried; and scarcely had he uttered the word when he found himself in a strange, mysterious land whose weird scenery assumed the most fantastic shapes in the dark.

"Here we are in the Enchanted Land, sometimes called Phantasma," began the Phantom, whom he was relieved to find close by his side. "Steady a moment, and when your eyes get accustomed to the dark you'll begin to recognise the folk. Hallo, here they come!"

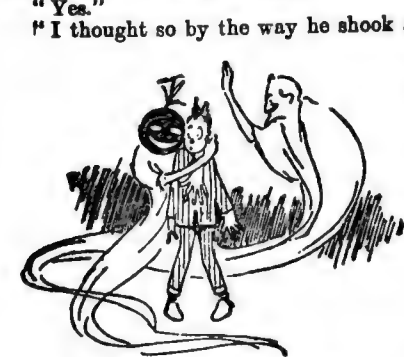
At that moment beautiful, ethereal forms seemed to flit before the eyes of the Sub-Editor.

"These forms that you see are the Shades," whispered his companion. "Christmas would be a mournful time to many a motherless boy or girl were it not for the Shades. When they go to bed, cold and sad, the Shades come to them in the form of loving mothers, so that these little ones forget their sorrow and even smile in their sleep."

"Oh!" gasped the Sub-Editor, for at that moment a figure stood out before them in dazzling whiteness. "Ah, the Spectre!" cried the Phantom. "Whither bound, friend?" "To a hundred and one different places," grumbled the Spectre wearily. "I hear a party of waits in Somerset are passing by a haunted churchyard on Christmas Eve, and I've got to look out the best place from which to jump out suddenly on them. Then the old Saxon Squire of Greenwood in the north is entertaining this Christmas, so I've got to practise jumping over his waterfall. Is your friend a mortal?"

"Yes." "I thought so by the way he shook about the knees. But ta! ta! I'll have to be going."

And instantly he vanished. "Hard-working chap, the Spectre," said the Phantom. "Hurrooo!" The Sub-Editor gave a shriek of terror, for a couple of arms



A turnip shaped head peered over his shoulder.

were suddenly thrown round his neck, while a turnip-shaped head peered over his shoulder.

"Down! Down!" cried the Phantom angrily. The assailant let go and collapsed on the ground. "Why," gasped the Sub-Editor, "it's a scarecrow!" The Phantom roared with laughter. "My dear fellow, have you never heard the famous song: 'Hush! Hush! Hush! Here comes the Bogey Man!'? This is Mr. Bogey, and, look, there is his brother, McBogle, from Scotland."

"That's true, mister," said the Bogey, speaking in a very rustic tone of voice.

"We bain't scarecrows, though lots of folk thinks we be, because they sees us in daytime standing amid the fields. Of course, when they take short cuts past us in the dark on Christmas night, we soon lets 'em see we ain't, by giving 'em a friendly hug."

"Hoots, ay, particularly the lasses!" chuckled McBogle. "Eh, sirs, ye should hear them squeal. But come awa', fren. I want tae see that patent grup o' yours. I'd like tae try it on at Hansel Monday."

And with that Bogey and McBogle moved away.

"Nice country lads," was the Phantom's comment. "They're perhaps too fond of rough play, but they are very faithful to the farmers with whom they live, and their pranks are the theme of many a humorous story round the cheery farmhouse ingle on a Christmas night."

Suddenly out of the gloom of the enchanted land the



Next minute he stood before the Sub-Editor in the form of a sad young lady.

Sub-Editor made out the form of a fine old Baronial Hall.

"What, going in here?" inquired the Sub-Editor.

"Yes, here are the private quarters of the Apparition. One of the greatest actors ever known. Probably you have seen him play the Ghost in *Hamlet*. Look, there he is rehearsing his famous part, 'The Murdered Heir,' for Christmas night."

The Sub-Editor's hair stood almost upright with horror, for at the other end of the gallery he beheld a strange, moody young man pacing to and fro with a dagger plunged up to the hilt in his bosom.

"We have come to see you rehearse for Christmas," began the Phantom. "May we ask what other characters you impersonate?"

"My favourite Christmas rôle is that of the 'Forsaken Lover,'" replied the Apparition. "Look!"

And next minute he stood before the Sub-Editor in the form of a sad young lady.

"Then I can become an animal."

Next minute he was a dog, who howled most woefully.

"Or an inanimate object."

And then he flitted through the air to the Sub-Editor's amazement, like a dagger.

"But what have these ideas to do with Christmas?" he blurted out.

"Why, man, take the 'Forsaken Lover.' I fill the hearts of all with pity, and excite lovers to be fonder of and more sympathetic with each other. Are these not desirable Christmas sentiments?"

"But, mind you, Christmas is not my only working season. Probably you have heard of some of my other rôles, such as the 'Drummer-Boy of Airlie,' and 'Anne Boleyn, of Hampton Court'?" Would you like to see me in one of these characters?"

The Sub-Editor bowed, when suddenly the Phantom shrieked with horror.

"No! No! It's most unlucky! These are always signs of death to mortals." And he waved his hands mysteriously.

Next moment there was a dreadful crash, and the Sub-Editor started to find himself in his cosy little room.

"What an escape!" he gasped. Then, as he noted his pipe lying on the floor as though it had just fallen, "Could it have been a dream, a vision?" he wondered.

"But, no," he added, "I think it must have been real!"

YOU CAN CONQUER INDIGESTION.

The old proverb says: "He who fights and runs away will live to fight another day." But you can't run away from Indigestion—from pains or wind in the stomach, or the horrors of constipation. You can't put off a headache or a bilious attack to a more convenient day. If Indigestion is causing you distress, you must fight it now! You will conquer it once for all if you fight it in the right way—with Mother Seigel's Syrup. Remember

WITH THE HERBAL TONIC

Indigestion springs from loss of tone or some weakness of your stomach and liver. Mother Seigel's Syrup—being made of medicinal extracts which tone and strengthen the stomach and gently stimulate the action of the liver and bowels—banishes Indigestion, root and branch. It enables you to digest and get nourishment from food, it keeps your system in healthful working order, and thus makes you feel, daily, the vigour and glow of health. Put it to the proof!

MOTHER SEIGEL'S SYRUP

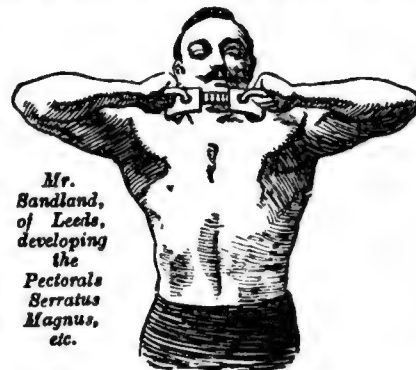
The 2/6 bottle contains three times as much as the 1/1½ size.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

To those who desire to get away from the beaten track in giving Christmas presents we can confidently recommend the Loop Developer. It is a gift that will be appreciated by most people, but especially by the young of either sex. The Loop is an appliance for scientifically and symmetrically developing the muscles of the body.

Contrary to the usual practice, the Loop develops on the lines of contracting the muscles—not tearing and stretching them. This safeguards against any danger of overstrain, as the resistance

applied is the resistance of one set of muscles against another. Moreover, it is adjustable to the needs of any person, whether strong or weak. Its use invigorates the internal organs of the body, and functional disorders such as constipation, etc., are unknown where the Loop is used regularly. The exercises are exceptionally simple, and can be performed in ordinary dress, and five minutes daily is all that is necessary to keep in good health. The Loop can be obtained at a cost of 12s. 6d. from most sports outfitters and men's outfitters and chemists, or direct from the Loop Developer Co., (Dept. 9), Kirkstall Road, Leeds, for 13s. Any of our readers who are interested should write to the makers for their booklet, "Health with Strength," which gives most useful information on this important subject.



Mr. Sandland, of Leeds, developing the Pectorals Serratus Magnus, etc.

THE XMAS NUMBER FOR THE HOME . .

HOME NOTES

READY NEXT FRIDAY, DEC. 10th. PRICE 2d.

There are twenty complete stories in the Christmas NOVEL MAGAZINE, price fourpence. Each one is brilliant.



Being the Tragedy of a Christmas Box.
By C. MALCOLM HINCKS.

Mr. JAMES BROWN, disregarding the injunction relative to a gift horse, opened the box of cigars, sniffed the contents and rolled one of the cigars between his finger and thumb.

"Wouldn't smoke 'em for anything!" he remarked contemptuously to his wife. "I should have thought a man with Robinson's money and position would have sent out something decent."

He was silent for a moment, then suddenly his face lit up.

"Here, Mary," he cried, "get me some paper and string, I'll send them round to Smith, he doesn't often smoke cigars, so he won't be much of a judge. I owe him something for a good introduction he got me. Let the girl take 'em round now."

He took a card from his case, placed it on the lid, did the box up neatly, and dispatched it by one of the two maid-servants who assisted to keep in order his comfortable Streatham villa. Then Mr. Brown sat back in his chair by the fire, lighted his pipe, and lazily watched his wife decorating the room for the coming festival.

"Good heavens, Mary, I forgot the card!"

Mr. Brown had sprung to his feet, his face was pale and agitated, his pipe had fallen to the floor. Mrs. Brown, in the act of placing a bunch of holly over the large portrait of a deceased maiden aunt, nearly fell from the steps, while the holly descended neatly upon Mr. Brown's upturned anxious face.

"I noticed a card," said Mrs. Brown.

"Of course you did," growled her husband; "so did I, resting on top of the cigars, 'To James Brown, with all good wishes of the season, from Richard Robinson.' That

card's gone round to Smith. I shut the beastly box up and forgot it. Smith will—Here, get on your hat and jacket, Mary, we must go round at once."

"Can't you go alone, I—"

"No, you must come and keep them talking whilst I try and get that card, if the beastly box hasn't been opened. Hurry up, for goodness' sake; it's a matter of life or death!"

Mrs. Brown did hurry up, for she thought what Mrs. Smith might say, and was as troubled as her husband. They were at the Smiths' about half an hour after the box of cigars had been delivered.

Conversation seemed awkward at the start; Mr. Brown's eyes roved round the room searching vainly for the parcel that his servant had so recently delivered.

Presently Mr. Smith observed, with a nervous glance at his wife:

"Thanks for those—er—cigars, old man; it was very good of you."

"By Jove, that reminds me!" said Mr. Brown quickly; "I left a paper in there that was not intended for you; would you mind taking it out, the fool of a tobaccoist left the—why, what's the matter?"

Mr. Smith's face had turned to a ghastly yellow, his wife abruptly left off her conversation with Mrs. Brown, and was staring before her with horrified eyes.

"I don't know how I can explain to you, Brown, but—I—I have sent those cigars away; you see, I scarcely ever smoke them, and a case of port arriving unexpectedly this afternoon from a man, I—er—in a moment of—er—excitement, sent him those cigars."

Mr. Brown wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"D-did you open the box?" he gasped.

"Unfortunately, no!" wailed the other. "I withdrew your card and sent the box off to the post immediately; it was just in time for the parcels post."

"I hope it is no one who knows me," said Mr. Brown, trying to speak with dignity. "You see, a bill—"

"I think you do know him," stammered Mr. Smith; "it is Robinson, of—"

"Robinson!"

Mr. Brown absolutely shrieked the word; Mrs. Brown nearly fainted, and neither quite knew how they came to be in the road walking homewards.

"I'm ruined!" gasped Mr. Brown; "absolutely

ruined; Robinson is a most influential man, he'll tell everyone in the City, and I shall be the laughing-stock of the place. Robinson promised to use his influence in a big bit of business for me early in the New Year. Now—oh, hang those cigars, and that fool Smith!"

Mr. Brown frightened away three urchins who were howling carols through his letter-box, and went into the dining-room. Mrs. Brown seemed to have lost her enthusiasm for decoration under the influence of her husband's gloomy forecast of the workhouse before many weeks had elapsed. Mr. Brown sat down in his chair by the fire again, and then mechanically stooped to pick up the pipe he had dropped when the first horror of the situation had dawned upon him.

Then Mrs. Brown was nearly startled out of her senses by a wild cry of joy. Mr. Brown, in stooping to pick up the pipe, had seen something white beneath the table. He held that thing now, chuckling like a maniac.

"Here's Robinson's card!" he howled: "it must have dropped out of the box when I opened it, and fallen under the table. We're saved, Mary, saved! He won't suspect anything now, for the brand he sent was common enough, too beastly common. Hurrah! get on with your decoration, but pass me the whisky and soda first, there's a good girl!"

Mrs. Brown rose and went to the sideboard.

"How about Mr. Smith?" she asked.

"Oh, he'll be in a blue funk!" said her husband, with a grin; "he thinks it's a bill with my name on in the box. I'll tell him to-morrow I was mistaken. He deserves to suffer a bit; it was very bad form to give away a present like that."

Mrs. Brown was a wise woman; she made no remark. Mr. Brown poured himself out a stiff glass of whisky and soda.

"Merry Christmas!" he said genially.

"How is it you never take a holiday? The boss could get along without you all right."

"I know he could, but I don't want him to find it out."

KATE: "Just look, these boots are ever so much too big!"

Mary: "Yes; you must have given him the number of the house instead of the number of your shoe."

Soccer Tricks and Knacks

Some Useful Hints for Football Enthusiasts.

By WILLIAM POLLOCK.

ONE kick at a ball is enough to expose the unskilled footballer. The player who lacks talent or who is raw at the game does not swing his leg properly, and he either kicks with his toe—an unforgivable sin with a moving ball—or else he gets his foot too far or not far enough under the ball. Also, his foot is probably aimed wrongly.

Leg-swing is most important, as it is only by correct timing of the ball that a true kick can be made. Leg-swing is, indeed, very much like forward play in cricket; a kick too soon will either send the ball just trickling a few yards away or straight up in the air; a kick too late will miss it altogether.

In kicking, the leg is held fairly loose and the knee is bent. At the instant of contact with the ball, however, the whole leg becomes firm, the muscles becoming tight automatically. The great aim in kicking is to get plumb behind the ball if possible, and to swing the leg in a straight line. It is obviously easier to kick a ball that is right in front than one which has to be reached out to the side for.

Another great point in good kicking is to keep the feet well together; the non-kicking leg should be almost straight under the body.

Some players have a habit of jumping off the ground and kicking or volleying while both feet are in the air. This is necessary sometimes, but the jump must be made at the exact moment that will enable the weight of the body to be got into the kick.

Mis-kicks result either from bad timing or from the kicker getting only "half" a foot to the ball. The boot-laces are, so to speak, the correct part of the boot to kick with; the very slopes of the sides of the instep naturally tend to "slice" a kick.

Shooting is often difficult for the reasons that it has to be done quickly, and that the space to be aimed at is comparatively small.

Shooting too high is perhaps the commonest fault. High shots are due to the toe not being pointed sufficiently

downwards, and the foot being forced too far under the ball, thus giving it an upward tendency. Too much force and not enough "placing" are other causes of bad shooting. Any ordinarily good goalkeeper can stop the hardest shots if they come straight at him; it is the well-directed ones, out of reach, that score.

The first essential in dribbling is to take short, quick strides. It is impossible to keep the ball under control if the legs and feet are allowed to "run away." Also, the short-striding dribbler can turn much quicker and preserve a better balance than the long-striding one. He is never on one foot for so long—which is, by the way, one reason why you so often see a big man knocked off the ball by a small man.

There are so many kinds of passes and so many ways of passing that it is impossible to treat this subject fully here. There is, however, one pass rarely practised by any but the most consummately clever forwards, which should be mentioned. This is the "little toe" pass.

A forward, an inside right, say, dribbles along until he meets a half or back. Swerving in towards the centre



The "little toe" pass. The forward swerving in, draws the defence, and then passes to his outside man.

of the field, he draws the defence off his outside man, to whom he glides the ball with the outside of his right foot—his little toe, it might be said. The difficulty in the pass lies in the fact that while the rest of the body is going to the left the right foot must kick to the right.



A bad mis-kick, like this, could be prevented if the player got the whole of his foot to the ball.

It takes much practice to head the ball with any degree of certainty and accuracy. Anyone can let a football fall on his head and bounce off, but that is not heading—it is dangerous.

For the neck muscles must be braced up to meet the impact of the ball—especially if it is a wet and heavy one—and the flight must be so judged that the top of the forehead can be applied to it. The beginning of the hair is, in fact, the right part of the head to use in heading; anywhere much higher than that simply sends the ball straight up in the air or else backwards instead of forward.

One of the most important and useful of all football knacks is what is known as trapping the ball. Trapping consists of stopping a falling ball dead, without allowing it to bounce or roll away. It is done by putting a foot on the top of the ball the instant it touches the ground. The limper the foot is held the easier it is to trap the ball. The sole of the foot only is used in trapping.

Many players, who are more clumsy than skilful, try to trap a ball with their shins. They bend both knees down towards the ground and trust to luck that the ball will "nestle." What it usually does is to bounce away to an opponent, however.

The reason why so many corner kicks are sent behind is, I am convinced, that so many players use the wrong foot



To insure a good trap, place the sole of the foot on the ball the instant it touches the ground—



—And keep away from the tendency to trap with the shins, as the ball usually bounces away.

to kick them with. An outside right taking a corner ought to use his left foot; an outside left, his right foot. By doing so he can afford to aim his kick further out because he imparts a natural inward swerve to it by using his "wrong" foot.

The secret of good punting lies in never raising the kicking foot too high or stretching it too far out. And a slight hop into the air puts the weight of the body behind the punt.

ONE THOUSAND PRIZES.

A Novel Competition for Christmas.

HAVE you, who are fond mammas and papas, ever paused in the midst of your joyful preparations for the coming of Santa Claus to think of the hundreds and thousands of poor little slum children, many of them lying on a bed of suffering in one of the great London hospitals, who have not the slightest hope that King Christmas will stop his laden chariot at their door?

Would you, if the opportunity occurred, help Santa Claus to pay a flying visit to a few of those whose homes he has never before visited?

We think you would, and that is the reason we are putting before your notice, for the second time, a scheme having this object in view, and originating from the house of Harrods, London.

Messrs. Harrods' idea is to get your children to help a number of slum children, as many as may be, to have a sunny Christmas if only for once in their sunless lives, and to encourage this idea they are offering a thousand useful prizes.

Of course, you, in the wisdom of years, look upon King Santa Claus as a myth, but in the little children's eyes he is a very pleasant reality. Set them the task of writing a "letter of welcome to Santa Claus at Harrods," and it will at once appeal to their imagination.

That, then, is what your little ones must do. Their letter may be as long or short as they please. It may be written in pen or pencil on ordinary notepaper, but you must not help them in any way. All you need do is to see that the name, age, and address of your child are legibly given. That is important if their prize is not to go astray.

Now each of the senders of the thousand best letters will receive a charming prize, while, to save the disappointment that always follows on non-success, every one of the other little competitors will receive a pretty souvenir acknowledgment from King Santa Claus himself.

Every boy and girl under thirteen years of age may write to Santa Claus, but they may only send one letter each, and this must reach Harrods not later than December 13th.

When the letter is written it must be inclosed in an envelope, together with six penny stamps or a postal order for sixpence, and addressed to "King Santa Claus, Palace of Harrods, Brompton Road, London." The sixpence is to help bring Christmas into the homes of the poor.

As each letter is received by Harrods, they will add another sixpence, making one shilling in all, and the total amount thus collected will be handed to a number of

children's charities, of which the best known to you is, perhaps, PEARSON'S FRESH AIR FUND. All the expenses are generously borne by Harrods, so that you have the knowledge that every one of your six pennies is giving a poor little Christmasless child something of a Christmas.

Some 21,000 letters were received by Harrods' Santa Claus last year, enabling upwards of £1,100 to be distributed, but this year more than twice that number are expected. You will understand, therefore, that this will entail a good deal of hard work if the prizes are to be sent to the fortunate winners before Christmas Day. For this reason it is as well that you set your little ones writing their letters as soon as possible. Why not to-day?

A FESTIVE(?) CHRISTMAS.

I do not want a Christmas feast
Of turkey or of goose;
And for mince-pies and pudding
I've got no earthly use.

I do not want the good roast beef
Of which old England boasts,
The jellies, or the trifles, or
Those devilled things on toasts.

I do not want to drink your health
In champagne, hock, or port,
To pull the stupid crackers, or
Do anything, in short.

I simply want to stay in bed,
I know you think I'm "cracked";
You'd do the same were you like me,
With biliousness attacked!

COMPLETING THE PARTY.

LITTLE Richard had been given a lovely ark for Christmas. It contained everything you could think of—elephants, spotted cows, blue monkeys, green cats, yellow dogs with purple spots, and a Noah and a Mrs. Noah standing at strict attention.

But it didn't contain everything little Richard could think of.

One day his father came upon him placing a couple of tiny splinters in man's first boat.

"And what are they, Richard?" inquired the perplexed parent.

"Why," replied Richard, "dem's microbes. Dere must 'a bin a pair o' microbes in de ark!"

And, when you come to think of it, so there must.

KINGS' CHRISTMAS DISHES.

King Edward has a Special Sauce and the Kaiser Carves the Boar.

THE staple dishes at the dinner-table of King Edward and Queen Alexandra on Christmas night are roast beef and roast turkey, whilst plum pudding is also always included in the menu; the latter is a dish that neither of their Majesties care much about, though they always partake of it on Christmas night. Punch after dinner used to be served in the huge punch-bowl belonging to the great gold dinner-service that is now kept at Windsor, and each guest used to drink the Sovereign's health in a tankard of punch; this custom, however, is no longer observed, but the King's health is drunk in champagne.

The Christmas dinner of their Majesties is, of course, prepared by the Royal chef, M. Menager, who has a salary of £2,000 per annum; a feature of the dinner is the celebrated sauce that is served with the roast turkey; this sauce is one of M. Menager's great inventions.

He was experimenting for nearly two years before he was able to make this sauce, which is only served at the Royal table once a year on Christmas night.

The great feature of the menu at the dinner-table of the Kaiser on Christmas night is the huge head of a roast boar. The carving on ordinary occasions is never, of course, done at the Royal table, but the boar is carved not only at the table, but is carved by the Emperor in person.

The boar is carried, on a huge silver dish; to the table by two servants; directly it makes its appearance, the whole of the assembled company rise in their places and drink to the health of the "Fatherland." This is, by the way, the most ancient Christmas custom observed at any Court in Europe.

Turtle soup, sucking-pig, and milk punch are the regular Christmas items in the menu at the table of the King and Queen of Italy on Christmas night.

A quaint ceremony takes place at the end of the dinner when the milk punch is served. All the Royal servants, clad in white and red, enter the State dining-room, and are lined up two deep at either side of the long table. Each is handed a tankard filled with milk punch, and then the King rises, and says: "Peace on earth and good will towards men!" The words are repeated by each servant, who then drinks the contents of the tankard.

On leaving the room each servant is presented with a sum of money equal to five shillings for every year he has been in the Royal service.

The only special Christmas dish served at the table of the Tsar on Christmas Day is mince-pies, of which every person at the Royal table partakes.

THE PIERCING PAINS OF A

COLD on the CHEST

SPEEDY RELIEF & CURE BY NOVEL BREATHE-ABLE MEDICINE.

IT is a sign that the body's defences against disease and death are breaking down in a most vital part when tightness seizes the chest, and when knife-like pains stab us back and front in the region of the lungs and throat. These and other disquieting symptoms of a cold on the chest arise from local inflammation of the tissues inside the lungs. Everything depends upon the promptitude and intelligence with

which we grapple with the early symptoms; for there is no greater menace to life itself than the neglect or the treatment by wrong methods of trouble in vital organs like the lungs.

What is required is not only to stop the coughing but to reach the exact spot where local weakness has allowed the disease germs to strike root. This is accomplished in a marvellously effective manner by Peps.

When a Peps tablet is dissolved in the mouth, the medicinal essences thus released convert the air we breathe into an atmosphere of the same nature as the wonderful life-giving air of the Pine Woods. This "medicinal" air is inhaled naturally into the throat and bronchial tubes to the lungs, bathing the delicate membrane and carrying with it a strengthening, comforting, and healing medicine right to the seat of the trouble in the chest where liquid medicines cannot penetrate. The inflamed and clogged bronchial tubes are cleared and healed. All coughing is thus stopped, and the chest and

lungs restored to a healthy condition. The wonderful curative effect of such a powerful and rational remedy brought into direct contact with the parts affected by disease or germ infection, stands out in strong contrast to the useless and mistaken habit of treating chest troubles with dangerous narcotics and sedative drugs swallowed into the stomach.

If you have caught a cold, take Peps promptly, and you will not only shake it off, but will escape the serious consequences.

Nurse's 10 Years' Hacking Cough.

Nurse L. Brown, 51 Cawdor Street, Granby Street, Liverpool, writes:—"Since I began to take Peps I have gradually got the upper hand of a nasty hacking cough that for years was a great drawback to me in my professional work. I had this dry, tickling cough for at least ten years, and many a time it was so persistent and made my throat so sore that I was obliged to take a complete rest."

"Naturally, I was for ever trying cough tablets and mixtures, and I think it is a great tribute to Peps to be able to say that they alone gave me real relief and enabled me to get better. After being relieved of a cough that troubled me for more than ten years, I have every confidence in recommending Peps to sufferers from bronchial troubles."

Try Peps
FREE!

If you suffer from Throat or Chest Troubles you should not delay trying Peps. Send this Coupon and 1d. Stamp, with your name and address, to Peps, Carlton Hill, Leeds, for a Dainty Free Sample.
P.W., Dec. 9, '09.

The Breathe-able Medicine.

Peps are a wonderful, natural cure for all sufferers from coughs, colds, sore or relaxed throat, bronchitis, weak chest, old-age cough, children's coughs and colds, croup, influenza, colds, and other throat and chest ailments prevalent in the changeable and perilous weather. (Of all chemists at 1s. 1d. or 2s. 6d. Post free at the same prices from Peps, Carlton Hill, Leeds. Every genuine box bears the title—PEPS. BE SURE YOU SEE THIS GUARANTEE, and refuse worthless substitutes.)

PEPS
A Pine Forest in Every Home



HIMSELF FIRST.

A GENTLEMAN, who was of a waggish turn, received a visit from his butcher just before Christmas. The butcher asked if there was any objection to the cook receiving her usual Christmas box.

"What is the usual Christmas box?" asked the customer.

The butcher evaded an answer, but on pressure thought that it would not be more than half-a-sovereign.

"Well, look here," said the gentleman, "if it is worth while to pay my cook half-a-sovereign for the chance of keeping my custom, it must be worth your while to pay me a sovereign for the certainty of it. So you send me up thirty shillings, and I will give the cook ten."

He has not yet received a remittance.

"PARDON me, sir," began the portly person in the train to the man who sat next to him, "but what would you say if I sat on your hat?"

"Suppose you sit on it, and then ask me?" suggested the other.

"I did!" admitted the portly person calmly.

"WHY do you still keep up that absurd Santa Claus myth?" asked the cynic. "I should have thought you would have laughed at it."

"Because," answered the man with a large family, "it is convenient to have someone to blame for presents that fail to please."

WENT AHEAD.

RAILWAYMEN—drivers, guards, and porters—are so accustomed to communicate with each other by means of gestures that the habit of looking for such dumb signals becomes a kind of second nature.

In this connection a railway official tells of an amusing incident on a part of the line where it is so common for cattle to be run over that reports of all such accidents had to be made to headquarters, with full particulars as to place and circumstance.

One day a complaint was received that a valuable cow had been killed on a certain day and by a certain engine. The case was referred to the proper department, but reference to the files showed that the driver had failed to report such an accident. Accordingly, he was sent for and asked why he had omitted to report the matter.

"I didn't know I hurt the cow," he said.

"Then you remember hitting her?"

"Yes, and I slowed up as she rolled over on her back; but she waved her feet for me to go ahead, and so I concluded she was all right."

"He's a coward as well as a bully. I called him a scoundrel in six languages and he didn't resent it."

"Was English one of the languages?"

"Er—no!"

A TRAMP went into a farmhouse recently, and seeing no one but an old woman he said, in very fierce tones: "Give me a drink of milk or else—"

But a man came behind him suddenly, and catching him by the neck, said: "Else what?"

"Else water," said the tramp humbly.

"Don't you think Christmas is more cheerful when there is a large family gathered about the festive board?"

"I do," answered the sardonic person. "A large family is a glad assurance that there is not going to be enough turkey left over to supply the menu for the next three days."

NO, NEVER!

In an Irish garrison town a theatrical company was giving performances, and some soldiers from the local barracks were engaged to act as supers.

Their duties included the waging of a fierce fight, in which, after a stirring struggle, one army was defeated on a given signal from the prompter.

For a few nights all went well, but on the Friday evening a special performance of the piece was to be given under the patronage of the colonel and other officers of the garrison.

The two armies met as usual at the end of the second act, they fought, and fought, and kept on fighting, regardless of the agonised glare in the eye of their (actor) general, who hoarsely ordered the proper army to "Retreat."

But the fight still went on, and soon the horrified manager saw the wrong army being driven slowly off the stage, still fighting desperately.

Down came the curtain amid roars of laughter, and the fuming manager hastened to ask the delinquents why they had failed to retreat on hearing the signal.

"Retraite!" roared a burly fusilier, whose visage had been badly battered. "And is it retraite ye'd have us, wid the colonel and all the officers in the boxes?"

Christmas Jests

HOW SHE REMEMBERED.

In a town in the north of England, where the pension officer was seeing after the various inquiries and ages of the old age pension claimants, one old woman particularly puzzled him by her inability to give him any clue to her age.

"Is there nothing important happened which you remember?" he asked kindly.

"Naw, nothing," she said dejectedly. Suddenly her face brightened up, and she blurted out: "Sure, I mind now, I heard my father saying I was born the night Cromwell died."

"Nonsense!" said the pension officer; "that couldn't be, for Cromwell died in 1658."

"I don't care a rap what you say," said the old lady, "for I remember well my father telling me often that I was born the night Cromwell died, and that he died from eating a feed of raw 'taties.'"

Cromwell, it turned out, was the name of an old nag belonging to her father.

"CAN you tell me what a smile is, Elsie?" asked the father of his little daughter.

"A smile is a laugh that cracks one's face without breaking it open," replied the small observer.

STOLEN FRUIT.



Ooster (who thinks his mule is having a cheap feed): "That's right, little boy; always be kind to animals. But who gave you those apples?"
Small Boy: "No one; I took 'em from your barrel."

A BAD COMPARISON.

JOHN was home from college for the Christmas holidays, and one of the things that struck the impressionable young man was that Dora Mason, the daughter of a near neighbour, had, during his absence, changed from a tomboyish schoolgirl into a very beautiful young woman. His father had also noticed it.

"Have ye noticed how old Joe Mason's daughter's shot up, John?" he asked his son. "Seems to me she's getting quite a handsome young critter!"

"Father," said John enthusiastically, "she is as beautiful as Hobe!"

"She's a jolly sight purtier than he be!" objected the old man. "Where's your eyes, boy! Joe's got a face like an old barn-door! It's her mother she gets her looks from."

BRONSON: "Has your wife asked you what you want for Christmas?"

Woodson: "No; and I fear the worst."

ARCTIC.

A TEAM from a certain barracks were playing a football match with a picked team from the local brewery in aid of the children's hospital. The brewers were having matters very much their own way.

At last Private Little, the soldier's centre-forward, received the ball and raced towards the brewers' goal, but just as he was about to shoot he espied a burly drayman descending upon him, and he fled.

"What did you do that for?" a sergeant asked him after the match. "You'll never make a soldier or a footballer. You should keep cool."

"Keep cool!" ejaculated Private Little. "Why, sergeant, I absolutely shivered!"

WASTED MELODY.

THE leader of a small party of carol singers tells the following seasonable story:

"Late one night, just before last Christmas," he says, "we were joined, in a dark square, by a man who, though he seemed to have been somewhat 'keeping Christmas,' asked to be allowed to 'join in.'"

"Remarkably grateful at receiving permission to do so, he sang, if loudly, not at all badly, and when we had finished our round I congratulated him."

"Yus, gov'nor," he said, "and I reckon our collection on Boxing Day ought to be all right!"

"Our collection?" I remarked; and explained to him that we were amateurs attached to the local institute, and singing merely for the love of the thing.

"Wha-at?" exclaimed the man, seemingly dumfounded. "Why, I thought we was the waits!"

TOMMY (on Christmas morning): "Where does Santa Claus get all his things, mamma?"

Mamma: "Oh, he buys them."

Tommy: "Well, he must be a jay to let anyone palm off a tin watch on him!"

FIRST CHRISTMAS GUEST: "Won't you join me in requesting young Squalls to recite?"

Second Christmas Guest: "But I don't like recitations."

First Christmas Guest: "Neither do I. But if the young beggar doesn't recite he'll sing."

BY DEPUTY.

It was Harry's first day on duty as a member of the Blankshire City Police Force, and, to tell "the whole truth and nothing but the truth," he felt somewhat shy and nervous.

Presently the inspector came along. "Come now!" he commanded, "you must keep the pavement clear there," pointing to a drapery emporium along the street, outside of which quite a crowd of ladies were fitting about.

The inspector passed on, but Harry's courage was in his boots. Fancy walking up and ordering all those ladies to "move on." He couldn't do it! A perspiration broke over him as he thought of the consequences should the pavement still be obstructed when his superior returned; but at last a bright idea dawned upon him, and, calling a boy who was playing near by, he whispered hoarsely into his ear:

"Go and tell those ladies to go away from that shop window, or else the bobby will come and take 'em to gaol."

JUST THE RIGHT THING.

"A CHRISTMAS present for your son, eh? And he is pretty hard to please, madam?"

"Indeed he is!" replied the fond mother.

"And I do want to please him so!"

"What age is he, madam?" inquired the assistant.

"He has just turned fifteen."

A triumphant smile illumined the visage of the salesman.

"Then, madam, give him this," he said.

And he laid before the lady a case of crimson Russian leather containing a horse-hide strop and a couple of exquisitely-shining razors.

"CHRISTMAS comes but once a year," said the cheery citizen.

"No use in its coming twice a year!" said the morose person. "Must give a man a chance to save a little money before he can spend it!"

PAIN PREVENTED.

It was a few days before Christmas time that two school lads went out for an afternoon's "carolling," or singing from house to house, for money. One of these lads had got his parents' consent to do this, but the other had not. The latter knew that on his return to school he would be punished by the schoolmaster accordingly. So the other lad said:

"Look here, Tom, I've thought of a plan to get you out of that whacking! Ask no questions, but just bend down and let me chalk somethin' on the back of your trousers."

"All right," answered Tom. Accordingly he bent down, and let Bill lift up his jacket and chalk something on the place where the cane would fall.

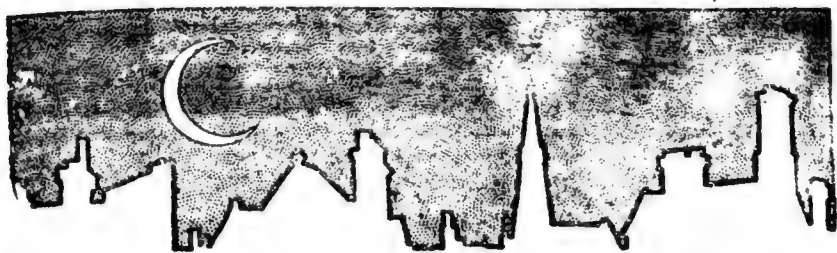
The schoolmaster was not long in calling the two scholars out, asking them to show their parents' written permission for absence. Tom, of course, could not.

"Then," said the master to the latter, "bend down for punishment."

The scholar at once did so, and the master took up his cane and raised the lad's jacket to give him a swish.

However, true enough, the master, instead of administering the threatened stroke, broke out into a hearty laugh, and, on recovering himself, he told the young rascal to go back to his place.

How could he, indeed, punish the lad when he read on his trousers the greeting, "Merry Christmas, sir!"

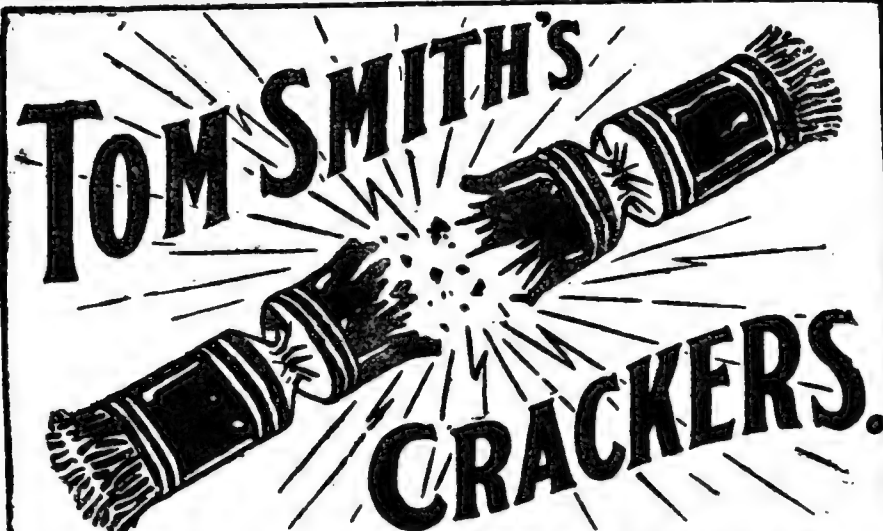


Be careful what you eat at night

As a supper food, Quaker Oats is invaluable. Try a dish of hot Quaker Oats when you are tired from the day's work—or cold and wet. It will warm and comfort you.

Quaker Oats is the best supper dish for growing children—nourishing and easily digested, and it ensures sweet sound sleep.

Quaker Oats



CAUTION! SEE TOM SMITH'S NAME ON EVERY BOX.

Makers to H.M. the King.

there are many cocoas, but only
Rowntree's Elect has the

Rowntree FLAVOUR

Have you tried it?

THE DANGER OF COLD IN Winter CUTS & SCRATCHES

AVOID THE RESULTING SKIN-TORTURE.

THE particular danger of cuts, scratches, bruises, and broken skin in Winter is that unless they are at once protected by dressings of Zam-Buk the cold will penetrate into the sores and seriously multiply the ordinary peril from dust and grit, and set up inflammation, festering and blood-poison. So it is with those common winter skin tortures, chapped hands and chilblains.

Directly the skin is broken by a cut, graze, or scratch, or chafed and cracked by the action of the cold winds and water, the one necessary precaution is to apply gently to the affected parts some of that powerful antiseptic balm, Zam-Buk.

The pure herbal juices from which Zam-Buk is prepared are so perfectly combined and refined that the immediate effect of these Zam-Buk dressings is soothing, antiseptic, and healing. Pain and inflammation are allayed, disease germs expelled from the wound or sore, which is thus protected against further germ attack and then rapidly healed with healthy new skin.

Zam-Buk is not only a powerful healer and skin purifier; it is strongly antiseptic and germicidal, and so forms the ideal protection for the skin against disease germs. The home wherein Zam-Buk is always kept handy is furnished with an ever-ready and reliable dressing for skin injuries, and a powerful antidote for all forms of skin torture and irritation.

Of all Chemists, 1/4, 2/6, or 4/6 per box.

EVERY HOME THIS DAY NEEDS A BOX OF Zam-Buk

THE IDEAL HERBAL BALM
WHICH PREVENTS FESTERING & POISONING.

The Best 7-Jewel Watch Ever Produced

Everybody knows what great value the Ingersoll 5/- watch has always been. The new 7-jewelled Ingersoll-Trenton offers the same relative value in a high-grade 7-jewel watch. The

Ingersoll-Trenton

(21/- Upwards, according to Case),

is made in a separate factory and is the only fine watch ever produced and sold on an economical basis. Except in number of jewels, the new "I-T" is equal to the highest-priced watches of other makes.

Both movement and case guaranteed more comprehensively than any other watch.

THE "I-T" MOVEMENT.

In Solid Nickel or Gun-Metal Cases	21/-	Solid Silver Case	32/6
10-year Gold-filled Case	40/-	10-year Gold-filled Case	50/-

Prices of "I-T" movements in Hunter and Half-Hunter cases on application.

Sold only by Responsible Jewellers and Watchmakers.

If your jeweller cannot supply you with the genuine "I-T," write to us for the address of the nearest jeweller who can. Get the name right. "Ingersoll-Trenton," "I-T"—that's IT.

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RICHARD MARSH'S GREAT ROMANCE.

THE LOVELY MRS BLAKE

A Story
ofa Strange
Disappearance.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE (continued). Together.

WHAT did happen was that within an instant George Blake was on his knees beside the bed, with his arms about his wife, and she was sobbing on his breast like a broken-hearted child. Andrew Holt followed his master into the room, just far enough to take Mrs. Jackson by the shoulder and lead her out; and when both of them were out, shutting the door, he said to her, in his curt, masterful tones:

"Woman, it were best to leave those two alone!"

And they were left alone; they never knew for how long, but the sun was well up in the sky before they had made an end of saying to each other the things which had to be said. And many of the things which were said were of the strangest kind, especially considering the positions of the persons who said them.

She told him of the agony she had suffered, and he covered her with kisses as she said it; for all the time he had his arms about her, and all the time she pressed herself against him. She told him of what she had done, with the scissors; and hid her face against his breast, and shook so that he found it hard to keep himself from shaking also.

And when she had done her telling, he told her just one thing, though he took a good many words to do it. In substance it amounted to this—that whoever's wife she might be in the eyes of the law, in the sight of heaven she was his, and his she should be. It was an odd position for a magistrate to take up, it frightened her; though she shook again with the delight of knowing that he still would have her for his own. All the same, she whimpered in his ear that it could not be.

"It can be," he told her, "and it shall. You love me?" As if he needed to ask the question; she did not seem to think it necessary to answer it, no doubt rightly deeming that her attitude was enough. "How much I loved you I didn't even guess until I'd nearly lost you. I tell you you're my wife in God's sight, and you shall be. Who is this man that he has any right to you? He has none, I tell you, he has none."

"But, George—"

"But me no buts; I will not have them. There is not any court of equity in the whole wide world which would hold that he has any more right to you than Andrew Holt, my head-keeper; and Andrew has got a wife already. I doubt if there is any court of law which would hold it either. What right can so utter and contemptible a scoundrel have to such a woman as you, the wife of my bosom, the mother of my child? Doris, do you know that all this time I've not the faintest notion of the rascal's name? I never asked you, and you didn't volunteer it, but now that he and I must have a few passages together, it is necessary that I should know."

"You've met him."

"Doris, I've met him!"

As if involuntarily, he had drawn away from her. She, reaching out, drew him back, closer, if the thing were possible, even than before; as if now, indeed, she needed the rock of his support. Although her face was pillowed on his breast, her voice had sunk so low that to enable him to catch her word he had to bend his head.

"He's your friend."

"My friend, Doris! What friend?"

"Gilbert Watson."

There was silence. If she had seen his face she would have known how on a sudden it was transformed; but she took care not to see it; she held him tighter, and hid her face the more. Just now her heart had seemed to be racing; now, all at once, it was standing still. She wished he would speak, say something, do something; even if he crushed the life clean out of her; anything rather than that he should stay so still.

After what seemed to her to be an infinity of waiting, words did come.

"I don't understand."

"Oh, George!"

It was like a sob which rent her being. He tried to steady himself, conscious that he needed all his self-control. The tragedy was taking another shape; horror was being piled upon horror, it seemed that the worst horror was still to come. He did his best to keep a tight hold over himself; plainly he would need to have all his wits about him if he had to look this thing in the face.

"Tell me clearly, Doris, what you wish me to understand, so that there may be no possibility of misunderstanding. Do you mean that Gilbert Watson who is at The Beeches? Her sobs told him. His face grew sterner. "But it's beyond my comprehension. Does he know?"

"He must."

"And he hasn't dropped a hint of it to me."

"George!"

"But the man must be the arch-fiend himself. Never by so much as a sign has he hinted that you and he are not perfect strangers."

"If you only knew how he used to play a part with me."

"Was that why he didn't want to listen to my story? Yet when he did he didn't turn a hair; I could have sworn that it all was new to him; that he felt for me with every fibre of his being. What an actor the man must be, what a brute!"

He made as if to rise; she tightened her hold.

"George!"

It was a cry of appeal; but he had to harden his heart, to shut his ears.

"Doris, you must loosen me for a moment, only for a moment; I'll come back to you again."

"If you go you won't come back to me, ever."

"Sweetheart, nothing shall ever part you from me while I have life; not Gilbert Watson, not fifty Gilbert Watsons; only you must understand that this has come as a shock to me—the man's identity. I had not dreamed that it could be he; I have to get the idea focussed; and to do that I need space and air. Loose me, sweetheart, for a moment; when I have got the idea well into my head, and you have told me all about it, I'll take you in my arms again, and I'll defy Gilbert Watson to take you out."

"George, I've told you all there is to tell, every word, that night. We've been playing blind man's buff with each other, George; you never told me your friend's name, and I never asked. I didn't know it, I didn't know he was alive, until I saw it on the envelope on which you'd written it; then Cox told me." Instead of loosening him she clung still tighter. "Don't you see that it was because he was coming that I had to go?"

"Does he know who you are?"

"That's what I've been wondering."

"But I showed him your portrait."

"Then he must know."

"What—what an actor he must be! Not a sign escaped him that he had ever seen your face before. Who would have guessed that he was looking at the face of the woman—?" He stopped short, as if it was beyond his power to carry the sentence to its dreadful finish. "What I find so hard is, as I tell you, to get the man into focus, to understand what kind of creature he really is. He must have known what kind of woman you are."

"He ought to."

The words were sighed rather than spoken. "Then he must have known that in coming to The Beeches to meet me and you that he was about to face a situation from which I should have thought that even the abnormal villain would have shrunk. This can't be a man, this must be a monster."

CHAPTER THIRTY.

Jack Craham.

MR. BLAKE, opening the door of the lady's apartment, came out into the living-room beyond. The two women were busy with household duties. He addressed the younger.

"Mrs. Blake is going to get up; will you give her what assistance she requires?"

Mother and daughter looked from each other to him, and back to each other, their looks showing the surprise they felt. Sarah Ellis, stammeringly, attempted what was probably meant to be remonstrance.

"Get up? Mrs. Blake? But, sir, the doctor—"

She got no further. Mr. Blake cut her short.

"Never mind the doctor, never mind anything, but just do as I tell you; Mrs. Blake is getting up; I shall be obliged by your giving her the assistance she requires."

Sarah Ellis passed into the inner room, amazement approaching stupefaction writ large all over her. Andrew Holt looked in at the open doorway.

"You still here, Andrew? I'm afraid we've been an inordinate time; it's very good of you to have waited; but I don't think there is likely to be anything to detain you longer."

He went out to the keeper in the garden. Holt eyed him with his shrewd brown eyes.

"The gift's been given, sir?"

"The gift? The one for which I prayed? Oh, yes, Andrew, it's been given, in a sense, but gifts sometimes have two edges, Andrew; this one has."

"I'm sorry to hear that, sir; maybe it's early days to judge, and it's better than you think. At least, Mrs. Blake isn't quite so ill as Sarah Ellis fancied?"

George Blake smiled; he seemed to detect a touch of irony in the speaker's tone.

"No, Andrew, thank God, she isn't. I fancy she has made an almost miraculous recovery. Now I want to take her somewhere where she won't be worried."

"Take her straight away? Is she well enough for that, sir? That's good hearing."

"What I'm wondering is, how it's to be managed. That nonsensical stuff they are talking down at The Beeches about Edgar Halsey makes it awkward. If it weren't for Mrs. Blake I'd soon put an end to it; but that's just it, I don't want her to be worried. Which is the nearest place from which you can get a vehicle of some kind without going to The Beeches?"

"There's the Ploughman's Rest along the road, sir; they have a wagonette. If you like I'll go and bring it over and drive it myself."

"That's not a bad idea, Holt, if you will. Don't be any longer than you can help."

Mr. Blake stayed out in the garden after the keeper had gone. There it was easier to breathe than in the house. He had so many problems to solve that the time went quicker than he thought; it seemed as if he had only been there a minute or two when word was brought that the lady was ready. Sarah Ellis, who brought it, spoke a warning word to him as he went in.

"She's not strong, sir; it's excitement which has made her seem so; she's weaker than you think; I doubt if she ought to be out of bed. She has had nothing to eat or drink, to speak of, since I don't know when."

"That's easily remedied. I'll see that she has food enough."

"But, sir, she won't eat it; we've all sorts in the house, Mr. Norton saw to that."

He left her to finish her sentence as she chose; perhaps the reference to Bryan Norton caused him to quicken his pace. He hurried into the lady's room. She was sitting, fully dressed, on a chair, from which she rose as he came in. Her weakness was made plain enough to him then—it startled him—she had to lean on the back of the chair to help her to stand.

"Doris, you ought to have stayed in bed."

"George, how could I when I was going away with you?"

"I shall have to put you straight to bed when I get you away. They tell me you've eaten nothing."

"I can't eat here; I'll eat all you want me to when you've got me away from here. How are we going?"

"Andrew Holt has gone to fetch a vehicle."

"Andrew Holt! Will he tell?"

"Andrew is like the man who had the gift of keeping silent in fifteen languages. Tell? Not he; if they racked him I believe he'd keep his own counsel on matters in which I'm concerned. He'll be back presently."

"There he is."

Both listened, she seeming glad of the support of the arm which was round her.

"There's someone, but it doesn't sound like a wagonette and Andrew; that's more like a motor-car. It is one; there's no mistaking the noise those gentlemen make. What undesirable person is coming worrying in a motor-car?"

There was a tapping at the door, then Mrs. Jackson appeared.

"If you please, sir, I think this is the doctor. Mr. Norton generally brings him in his motor-car."

Mr. Blake said something under his breath which was flattering neither to the doctor nor to Mr. Norton. The sound ceased; Mrs. Jackson explained:

"They can't bring the car right up to the house, sir, nor yet close to the garden, the road's so bad. You'll see them in a minute coming down the garden path."

The persons they did see presently were not the ones they had expected. Three figures came hurrying down the path, then into the house. Bryan Norton was in front. He saw Mrs. Jackson standing with the open door in her hand.

"Hullo, old lady, what's the matter?" Apparently he saw in the look which was on her face, as well as on her daughter's, that something unlooked for had occurred. "I hope there's nothing wrong." He dropped his voice.

"How's the patient?"

He had advanced far enough into the room to enable him to see through the door which the old woman was holding open; the language to which he gave utterance at the sight of what he saw was in his most characteristic vein. "Great Caesar's ghost! Out of bed! And old Blake. What the which, the where, the—does all this mean?"

He turned to someone who was behind him. "Now, Mr. Watson, the scene couldn't have been better set if you'd been your own stage-manager."

Gilbert Watson advanced towards the open doorway, Mrs. Jackson moving aside to let him through. At sight of him there came a cry of rage from Blake.

"You infernal villain!"

His manner suggested that from words he would pass to action quickly, had not the lady detained him by holding tightly to his arm.

"George! Who is this? What do you mean?"

Bryan Norton, at Mr. Watson's back, was perfectly willing to act the rôle of mischief-maker in chief.

"Now, Mr. Watson, are you prepared to deny, to her own face, your wife?"

"Mr. Norton!" the lady cried.

"Never was a gentleman more gifted with the capacity for denial. Now, sir, deny again."

It was the lady who replied, with a very singular intonation in her voice.

"George, what does Mr. Norton mean? Who is this gentleman?"

On George Blake's countenance was a look which recalled that which is seen on a pugnacious dog when confronting a possible enemy.

"I cannot tell you what Mr. Norton means; but surely it is unnecessary for you to ask me who this gentleman is, since this is Gilbert Watson."

"This is Gilbert Watson? But not my Gilbert Watson?"

"Then who the dickens is he?"

The lady, who had drawn herself a little away from him, suggested by the peculiarity of her bearing that she was struggling, still in doubt as to whether she was asleep or waking, to get at the meaning of some strange dream.

"I cannot tell you whose Gilbert Watson he is, but he certainly is not mine."

"Then, Doris, what on earth did you mean by what you told me only a little time ago? Watson, this is my wife; have you ever seen her before?"

Watson's words could scarcely be regarded as an answer to Blake's inquiry. Thrusting his hands into his jacket pockets, he drew a long breath, as if his feelings were altogether too much for him.

"This is the queerest thing, the very queerest thing, upon my word and honour."

"What do you mean by talking like that, man? Can't you answer a plain question when it's put to you? Have you ever seen this lady before? Answer me, man; answer!"

Blake's agitation was the more marked since Gilbert Watson's calmness seemed to increase. He looked from the lady to the gentleman, and from the gentleman to the lady, with twinkling eyes. When he spoke it was not as if the tragic side of the situation impressed him most.

"No, Blake, I have not seen this lady before, nor, I believe, has she seen me; but I have seen her picture, and, now, I understand."

The excited Mr. Blake turned to the lady for an explanation. (Concluded on Page 500.)

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THE LOVELY MRS. BLAKE. (Continued
from page 498.)

"Doris, what does the fellow mean? Watson, what do you understand? Speak out, man! Can't you see that I'm on tenter hooks?"

"It's a longish story; and I'm not sure that I am permitted to tell it, but under the peculiar circumstances perhaps it would be better for all of us if it were told now—but in private."

Blake strode to the door.

"Norton, come in. Is that you, Miss Norton? Will you be so good as to come in also?" Sister and brother entered; he shut the door behind them. "Now, Watson, let's have it. Mr. and Miss Norton know something of the tale already; it's for you to judge if any harm will be done by their knowing more."

"No harm whatever. Mr. Norton, from my point of view, doesn't count."

"Thank you." This was Mr. Norton.

"But as regards Miss Norton, in view of the assertions which her brother has made in her presence, I am very anxious that she should hear the whole story of my association, if it can be called association, with this, I believe, most cruelly injured lady. Then Miss Norton will be able to judge what grounds her brother had for the—something more than doubt, which he cast upon my word—I think, Mrs. Blake—for let me tell you at the very beginning that I have no doubt whatever that you are Mrs. Blake—"

"What—what do you mean? How do you know that? What Gilbert Watson are you? You—you can't be Gilbert Watson, of Long Hinton."

"I can be, and I am; but I'm coming to those points shortly. I was about to observe that I think, Mrs. Blake, I am correct in saying that you have never seen me before, even in a photograph?"

"That, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I certainly never have. I believe I should have remembered it if I had."

"You pay me a compliment. I saw you, as I have said, in a photograph, and I have the photograph still; I hope you will forgive me if I tell you that I was so struck by the face which was on it, that I could not help but keep it. It is one of the very few things belonging to its original that I still have in my possession; but again I must ask for your forgiveness, it seemed to me so beautiful, that I regarded it as a dream face, someone's ideal of feminine loveliness, rather than the mere commonplace likeness taken from a living model."

"That is the reason, Blake, why, when you showed me that portrait you have, although it recalled something, I could not think what. Honestly, I hadn't a notion that the picture ever had an original; I regarded it as a picture only; possibly a photographic reproduction of some great painting."

"Hear, hear! You've rather a neat way of turning compliments, Watson, when you're put to it; and you do it with an air as if a compliment were the last thing you intended; you've a masterly way of driving them home."

"This was Bryan Norton. Possibly his words were the cause of the faint blush which came on the lady's pale cheeks, but the others ignored him utterly. George Blake showed an inclination towards impatience."

"Pray, Watson, where did you find this remarkable photograph? How did it ever come to be in your possession?"

"I found it among Gilbert Watson's papers."

"Gilbert Watson? Then are there two of you?"

"Blake, this is a queer world, and you yourself have a memory like a sieve. You didn't recollect me when I met you that afternoon in Pall Mall?"

The charge seemed to take Mr. Blake a little aback.

"Not at the first moment perhaps, but I did directly afterwards."

"I know. You came marching out of St. James's Street, I was about a hundred yards along Pall Mall, but I knew you the moment you were round the corner. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'I wonder if he knows me?' And you didn't."

"I tell you I mayn't have done the first moment—I was thinking of some business I'd been doing—but I did inside five seconds."

"Stuff! You had a hazy recollection, but you couldn't place me. As for your memory, you'd not only forgotten my name, you'd forgotten it still; you don't even know it at the present moment."

George Blake's confusion was obvious; he looked as if he could not make the other out at all.

"Not know your name? Not know it? Why, why you told me it was Gilbert Watson."

"I did, and it is; but it wasn't when you first knew me in those days of auld lang syne on which you waxed so eloquent."

Mr. Blake's agitation did not become less marked; he began to fidget about the room as if his joints were hung on springs which compelled him to keep moving; his remarks were as odd as his movements.

"This beats—this does beat anything! Of all the extraordinary things! Doris, do you know—? Well, it's no use my saying anything because I hardly know how to put it myself; but the fact is, look here, I'll make an open confession. I'll just show you what an ass a normally sensible man can make of himself. Do you know all the time I had it at the back of my head that I couldn't recall the name 'Gilbert Watson' as having been with me at Rugby? And yet you were there, I recollect you perfectly; I recollect a dozen things about you; I recollect that we were chums."

"Oh, yes, we were chums; we were great chums in those days. They called you David, and they called me Jonathan."

"Of course, I know they did. I recall all that, remember it perfectly; lots of it as if it had only happened yesterday; but, for the life of me, I can't recall your—your—"

"Beastly name. That's right; say it."

"I was about to say, that for the life of me I can't recall your name; but, all the same, when you told me it was Gilbert Watson, I had a feeling that it wasn't."

"I was pulling your leg; though I confess I was a little surprised to find it so easy."

"I couldn't charge you to you face in the middle of Pall Mall with saying the thing which was not."

"Oh, couldn't you? You could, and you would, if you'd thought of it; but you didn't. My dear Blake, when you and I were together at Rugby I was Jack Graham."

"Jack Graham! Of course!" Mr. Blake's conduct was as extraordinary as his language; he actually shook his fist in the other's face in the excitement of the discovery. "You dashed old silly idiot, of course you're Jack Graham! What an idiot I am! But how do you come to be Gilbert Watson?"

"That's the story. I had an uncle, Gilbert Watson, of Long Hinton. He had two nephews—I was one, his sister's son; the other was his brother's son, who was called after him Gilbert Watson. He was—well, he's dead, and our paths didn't often cross; I fancy his was rather a curly one. He and his uncle didn't get on at all, for various reasons. In fact, he made a mess of things all round—a pretty baddish one. Then he joined the great majority; I was with him when he died."

"You were with him?"

The question was the lady's.

"He died, as perhaps you know, in Africa."

"That was what I was informed."

"Your information was quite correct. You see, it was this way. I myself was in Africa at the time. I had a letter from a man I knew. He told me that a chap who said he was my cousin was in his part of the world, and had been making things hum, and that now he was in a precious bad way; and if I really was his cousin, perhaps I'd pass the word to his people, and someone would come along and look after him—he was very much in want of someone who knew him."

"So I went myself. By the time I got there he was dying, and I can't help saying that under the circumstances it was the best thing he could do. I hope you'll excuse me, Mrs. Blake, but it's a fact. He'd been drunk ever since most of the mon round there had known him, and latterly it had brought on some sort of delirium tremens, and in one of his fits of madness he'd had difficulties with the natives, in which he had been wholly in the wrong; and they'd made a holy sight of him."

"The day after I was with him he was dead, and the same day they buried him. He hadn't left much behind him; all the things he had were contained in a skin-covered box. There was a bundle of letters, and some odds and ends, which I burnt; I'd no doubt they related to incidents in his life which were strictly private, and I had not the slightest desire to intrude upon his privacy. One thing I kept, and that was the photograph of which I've told you; it was wrapped in a piece of tissue paper with the letters. But I'd no idea who it was; I thought it was quite possibly a photograph which he had picked up somewhere of some famous picture."

"How come you to be bearing his name—to have ceased to be Jack Graham?"

"Nothing could be simpler. I sent the news of his death to his uncle, who was also mine. He wrote to say that he was getting an old man, of which I was perfectly aware, and that he'd like me to come back to England and go and see him at Long Hinton. I had various little business matters of my own to attend to; I was in no hurry; I had nothing to thank him for; he had never paid me any attention, and he'd behaved very badly to my mother."

"When I did return to England one of the first things I learned after I landed was that he was dead, and that he had left me all his money, coupled with the eccentric condition that I was to shed my own patronymic absolutely and adopt his; I was not even to reveal my original identity."

"There always had been a Gilbert Watson, of Long Hinton, and he wanted there to be one still. I wasn't over eager—indeed, all the other way. I never knew much of my father—he died before I was in my teens; but my recollection of him was that he was a trump. My mother, who was as good a judge of a man as I ever saw, used to tell me that her one desire was that I should grow up like him—and that was good enough for me. I knew I had no cause to be ashamed to bear his name."

"As for my uncle, he was, not to put too fine a point on it, a disagreeable old curmudgeon. He quarrelled with my father because he wouldn't kow-tow to him; and when my mother was left in a position in which he knew perfectly well that a little help would have made all the difference, he wanted to impose conditions which it would have been impossible to accept; and because she couldn't accept them he quarrelled with her. So I'd no reason to wish to exchange my name for his, and so I told the lawyers."

"They gave you reasons, I suppose, which were weighty enough to induce you to change your mind?"

"Well, my life had been a pretty hard one; I wasn't getting younger, and I wasn't getting richer. A man who's gone through what I have gets some things knocked out of him. I'm not sure that Shakespeare wasn't right, and that 'A rose by any other name,' you know. I might as well be Watson as Graham; but I certainly never bargained for the friend of my boyhood's days forgetting that I was Jack Graham."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE.

The Things which were Said.

THEY would have gone down to The Beeches five in a motor-car, only when the point was broached Gilbert Watson looked at Bryan Norton, and they both went aside with Mr. Blake; in fact the three men went into the garden together, and there George Blake was informed of what was in the tonneau of the car under the rugs. So Bryan Norton went to The Beeches in the car, with the dead man as his sole companion. Then, when Andrew Holt arrived with the wagonette from "The Ploughman's Rest," Mr. and Mrs. Blake went with him, and Olive Norton and Gilbert Watson walked down together.

It was a walk which neither of them was ever likely to forget. In the first place, because the weather was so fine; in the second, because the way was so fair; and in the third—for other things. They did not say much—possibly because they had so much to say—until they had quitted the high road and were through the gate, and were on the path which led down through the forest to The Beeches. Then certain things were said, as, to begin with, this—by the lady:

"I am so sorry that my brother was rude to you."

"In what way?"

"As to doubt your word when you said what you did."

"You mean his insisting that I was married?"

"Of course it was no business of his in any case. It was sheer impertinence on his part to interfere in your affairs at all. As if it made any difference to anyone if you were married or if you weren't—except to yourself."

"Except to myself. It would make a difference to me. Because, of course, if I wasn't married, I might want to be."

"Naturally, some men do want to marry sometimes. Look at that effect of the sunlight gleaming through those beeches—isn't it pretty?"

Apparently he was not interested in the effect of the sunlight through the beeches; at least he did not treat her question with that courtesy it seemed to deserve.

"How much younger do you think a wife ought to be than her husband?"

"Really! What a question! Is there any 'ought' about it? What does it matter?"

"Of course a girl wouldn't want to marry a man who was years older than herself."

"I don't see why she shouldn't. She wants to marry a man—that is, if she wants to marry at all—and not a boy. Some men don't cease to be boys till they're years older than she is."

"Miss Norton." She looked at him. "Do you believe in love at first sight?"

She looked away to where the sunlight was glancing through the beech trees.

"I suppose that sort of thing has been known."

"But in the case of a fogey?"

"Who's the fogey?"

"I suppose I am."

She laughed, as if he had been guilty of a joke.

"I didn't think you were so conceited."

He glanced at her, askance.

"Conceited? In supposing myself a fogey?"

"It's such a ridiculous assumption—as if, in all essentials, I wasn't years older than you are. But please don't let us talk nonsense. You remember what you said about being sorry that you ever came to The Beeches? It strikes me that, as things have turned out, it was just as well you did."

"I think so too. In any case, whatever reasons I might have had, there was one reason which would have topped all the others, and turned my sorrow into joy."

"And that was?"

"Meeting you."

It was either because the statement was so direct, or because of the tone in which it was said, or because it was so unlooked for—for one of these reasons, or for some other, for the moment all her breath seemed to be taken away, so that she was left with none to answer; and it was after that that those things were said.

As has already been pointed out, it is not likely that that walk will ever be forgotten by either of them, because Olive Norton is now Mrs. Gilbert Watson, as a direct consequence of the things which then were said.

At the inquest which was held on the body of Edgar Halsey, young Mr. Bryan Norton caused no slight sensation by the frank admission which he made while in the witness-box. That his conduct had been, to say the least of it, irregular, he candidly allowed. But as no evidence was produced which discredited his rather remarkable story, as the coroner pointed out to the jury, it seemed to him that they had no option but to return a verdict to the effect that the unfortunate man had been accidentally drowned; they might, if they liked, by way of a rider, censure Mr. Norton's behaviour, but beyond that he did not see what could be done.

The jury, without leaving the court-room—the inquest was held in the parlour of "The Ploughman's Rest"—returned as their unanimous verdict two words only: "Found drowned"; and they said nothing to Mr. Norton.

Afterwards, when the court-room had become again the bar-parlour, and the coroner had gone, the members of the jury had a little refreshment with Mr. Bryan Norton, and from him they then learnt certain little particulars which he had not thought it necessary to mention to them when they were a jury, which convinced them more than ever that in returning the verdict they had done they had been profoundly right.

Things had not turned out altogether as Inspector Hobden had expected, which perversity of nature, as he appeared to regard it, seemed to cause that zealous officer a certain amount of disappointment. He would have had so excellent an opportunity of earning for himself distinction in the public eye if they had turned out as they might have done; but, if he was disappointed, everyone else rejoiced—which, of course, did not make affairs any pleasant for him.

Cox, in particular, was plain-spoken to an exasperating degree. The inspector told him, with a sudden burst of candour, that if he had not held the position he did hold, he would have made him take his coat off and treat him to a lesson in manners; whereupon Cox instantly replied that he was quite willing to forget that the inspector was the kind of ass he really was, and take the lesson there and then—a response which did not tend to soothe the inspector's ruffled feelings.

When the inspector had taken himself away finally, there was perfect peace again at The Beeches, and perfect happiness—a happiness the more perfect because it had suffered such tragic interruption.

Mrs. Simmons had not gone far with the baby; she had only taken him to her own home, that he might be removed from the contamination of Gilbert Watson's presence; a telegram soon brought maid and baby back again.

George Blake is perhaps a little wiser than he was; he has learnt that the unusual does happen, and that a man never knows what kind of man he really is until "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" have turned his heaven into torture; it is by his bearing in the hour of his agony that you shall tell the man.

He is still the devout lover of his wife, and as proud as ever to know that all over the county she is spoken of, by high and low, rich and poor, as "the lovely Mrs. Blake."

THE END.

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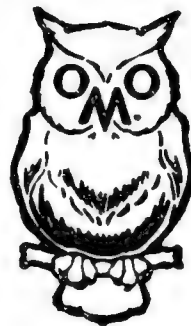
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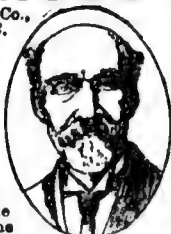
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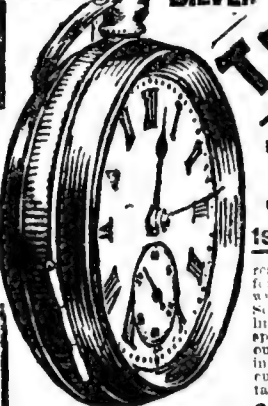
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This statement is based on hundreds of letters received every year—such as this letter

Upwood, Huntingdon, March 3rd, 1909.
Dear Sirs,—I have found SCOTT'S Emulsion most beneficial in the case of a little patient just recovering from scarlet fever which left him in a very low and weak state. Upon taking SCOTT'S Emulsion, in a very short time I noticed a great improvement in him, and his strength was built up splendidly.
He is now quite strong and well and has returned to school, stronger and better, I firmly believe than he ever was.
Yours very truly (Signed) ELIZA JACOBS.

SCOTT'S Emulsion cures a condition—no matter the age of the patient—and will be approved by your Doctor for building up after FEVER if you ask him. Send for free sample bottle—enclose 3d. for postage and mention this paper. A charming booklet for your child comes with it. SCOTT & BOWNE, Ltd., 75-77 Stonecutter Street, London, E.C.



CHRISTMAS
DAINTY DISHES.

Creamy Dates

Make a pretty dessert. Take some fine dates, slit the fruit down one side and remove the stone, and with a penknife take out any dry skin from the inside. Fill the cavity with almond paste made into the shape of the date-stone, leaving it to show a little, which gives the appearance of the date having burst open.

Orange Cake.

Cream together three ounces of caster sugar and three ounces of butter, then add three well-beaten eggs. When thoroughly beaten sift in gradually the grated rind of an orange, and half a pound of flour, with which is mixed a teaspoonful of baking-powder. Beat well and place in a greased tin. Bake in a quick oven for an hour; when cold, cover with orange icing.

Boxing-Day Pudding.

Take the remains of the plum-pudding and cut it into slices. Grease a mould and in it put the slices of pudding, filling up all crevices with a custard mixture in these proportions: Work a teaspoonful of flour into one egg, add a teaspoonful of sugar and half a pint of milk with flavouring to taste. Steam gently three-quarters of an hour and turn out to serve.

A Simple Christmas Pudding.

Raisins, currants, flour, and suet, three-quarters of a pound of each; half a pound of breadcrumbs, two eggs, half a pound of warm treacle and a teaspoonful of ginger. Warm the treacle and add a little milk. Mix all the ingredients together. Be sure to have the suet chopped very finely and the fruit carefully prepared. Boil at least eight hours and three more the day of serving.

Mince-meat.

Half a pound of chopped suet, half a pound of stoned raisins, half a pound of chopped currants, half a pound of chopped apples, three-quarters of a pound of mixed peel finely chopped, three-quarters of a pound of sugar, and spice to taste. Mix the ingredients well together, place them in jars and then add two wine-glassfuls of brandy. If the mince-meat is kept for a long time a little more brandy may be added from time to time.

Rich Christmas Pudding.

Half a pound of beef suet, quarter of a pound of flour, quarter of a pound of breadcrumbs, half a pound of stoned raisins, half a pound of currants, two pieces of candied peel. Mix these ingredients with three well-beaten eggs in which two wine-glassfuls of brandy have been stirred. Mix all thoroughly, and fill basins quite full of the pudding mixture, pressing it well down. Tie a floured cloth over and boil at a gallop for ten hours. The day of serving boil the pudding four hours more.

Mince-meat Fritters.

Take eight ounces of good mince-meat and mix thoroughly with two ounces of stale cake crumbs. The remains of sponge, Madeira, macaroons, etc., will serve excellently. Add one dessertspoonful of sherry, the juice of half a lemon, and two eggs well beaten. Have ready a pan containing a good supply of well-clarified dripping, and when boiling drop in dessertspoonfuls of the mixture, which have been rolled in a little flour. Fry for eight minutes, drain thoroughly, and sift caster sugar over.

A Mould of Hare.

Is most useful at this time. Take the remains of jugged or hashed hare, cut the meat in small pieces and the stuffing balls in halves or quarters. Warm the gravy, adding to it, if necessary, a little red currant jelly and some port-wine. Dissolve in this half an ounce of gelatine powder, making in all one pint. Add the meat and seasoning, and when nearly cold pour into a mould which has been ornamented with slices of egg. When cold and set turn out.

Pressed Braised Beef

Is delicious, and very useful dish to cut from at Christmas. Take a good piece of rump-steak of about six pounds. Bone this carefully, tie round with a tape, and skewer into good shape. Place a layer of streaky bacon in a stewpan with a carrot, one onion, a stick of celery, and a turnip, all thinly sliced. Add a few herbs tied in a bayleaf and just sufficient stock to cover the bottom of the pan. Stew all slowly for four hours. Place on a board with another on the top with weights on it. When quite cold glaze and serve.

How to Deal
with your "Hubby"

THE PROPER WAY TO TREAT HIM.

At least, not unless you want anything more.

Then, again, dear lady, you make the dire mistake of expecting your husband to continue to worship you, to treat you as an ideal being—a goddess, in fact.

Now, your husband cannot be expected to find it particularly engrossing after a time. He doesn't always want a sweet-heart wife, not even an ideal being. On the contrary, he wants a wife, a woman who knows how to make him happy, who can listen to his troubles and confidences, and give him advice if necessary. Above all, he wants to be made comfortable.

Nothing annoys a man more, who is fairly easy-going, to find that his wife is capable of going into hysterics because he insists on having his den a perfect picture of disorder, or because he has an irritating habit of flicking his cigar ash everywhere but in the proper place.

Look Cheerful and Say Nothing.

True, it is very hard to find cigar ends in your choicest embroidery and among those lovely curtains, but you must know that a man—especially a husband—has a prescriptive right to be untidy, just as much as he must have perfect freedom to fret about his torn shirt collars.

The best thing in the world to do is, just to bear it patiently. It is not the least use to point out to him the many ash-trays that adorn the room. Ash-trays were meant for everything else but what their name indicates. At least, this seems to be the opinion of most husbands.

Of course, it is your ambition to be an intelligent little wife, but in your enthusiasm allow me to tell you that you sometimes err. For instance, you try to improve your cleverness, not knowing that this is the last thing a man wants in his wife.

Every wife should know that it is not she who should seek admiration after marriage, but she who must dispense it. For there are a good many husbands in the world who are spoiled, for the simple reason that they were sat upon, instead of being admired, when the occasion offered, by their better halves!

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITY HINTS.

BEFORE LEAVING, cups of clear soup will be appreciated by the guests at a party. It can be served in tea-cups with other light refreshments.

A FIRE in a dancing-room is a great mistake, be the cold outside ever so great. The dust flies when the dancing begins, and the room is soon overheated.

A FLOOR FOR DANCING may be easily prepared. Scrub it well and then wash over with skim milk. When thoroughly dry, scatter boracic powder over and work it in well with the feet. This will make an excellent surface at very small expense.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS presented by Santa Claus himself makes a novelty. He may wheel in his wheelbarrow full of gifts. In the case of New Year gifts, the distributor should be a small boy in a white woollen suit, with silver wings and 1910 in silver tinsel across his chest.

AFTERNOON PARTIES are easily arranged by those who cannot manage anything more elaborate. Tea can be served in the dining-room on arrival. The guests then move into the drawing-room, and if one of the guessing games, of which so many are arranged nowadays are provided, the time will quickly pass. A prize for the most successful competitors and a box of sweets for a booby prize is all that is required.

CHILDREN'S GAIETIES figure largely at this season. Dancing is more popular than any other kind of entertainment. Remember that to the little folk "real programmes" are almost more essential than to the grown-ups.

PROGRESSIVE GAMES make a very good entertainment for a party. Have as many tables as you are likely to want, allowing one for each four guests, and at every table have a different game—halma, whist, dominoes, etc.; the greater the variety the better. This is excellent for a large party, where all may not care for cards.

A GIGANTIC CRACKER is a great amusement for a children's party and can be easily made at home. Make a good-sized drum of cardboard, cover it with crepe paper to resemble an ordinary cracker. Fill it with presents, and run through it several strings. Arrange a tug-of-war for the children, and as they pull the cracker it will break, scattering the presents broadcast.

If **KING FROST** favours us with a visit, arrange a skating-party in the evening. Torches may be stuck all round the ice, unless there is a full moon. Dancing and other amusements may be indulged in. If possible, serve hot coffee and tea during the evening, and end the festivities by singing "Auld Lang Syne," with hands clasped all round.

CHRISTMAS HINTS
FOR THE HOME.

Snapdragon

Always creates much amusement where there are young people. Procure a bottle of the cheapest brandy for the purpose.

Christmas Presents

Begin to arrive by post days before-hand. It is a good idea to keep all, and open them together, say at breakfast time on Christmas Day.

When Hollyberries Are Scarce

Get some enamel paint, thin it with turpentine, and then dip into it some large berried ivy. At a distance the berries look very similar.

Christmas Stockings

Are a great joy to the small children. Give them plenty of little parcels to unpack. It is this, more than the value of the present, which gives the pleasure.

A Blazing Plum Pudding

Is part of Christmas to the children. Pour two tablespoonfuls of brandy into a cup, light it, and pour over the pudding the moment before putting on the table.

Frosting

On evergreens gives great brilliance to them. Buy one pound of Epsom salts, and sprinkle the holly and evergreens with it, and they will appear as if touched by Jack Frost.

Children and Nuts.

Never allow nuts on the table where the children take their meals, and tell the little ones to refuse them if they are offered at a party. In this way the chief source of indigestion, childish aches, and Christmas doctor's bills will be removed.

Paper Chains

Are quickly made. Cut some wide strips of coloured paper, fold in half, and crinkle up over a knitting needle. Join into a loop with a touch of strong gum, and go on adding loops till your chain is long enough.

When Dressing the Christmas-Tree

Be very careful how the candles are arranged. Put them chiefly on the top branches, where there are no other branches above them to ignite. Have ready a wet sponge on a stick to put out any bit which may take fire.

Cold Bedrooms.

It is a wise plan to light a fire in the bedrooms of elderly people at this season of the year. Leaving the overheated room in which goodwill is being expressed, and retiring to, and undressing in, a chill sleeping chamber is apt to have ill effects.

Decorations

In the house form an especial feature of the Christmas festivities. Care must be taken that the hollyberries are not strewn about and trodden into the carpet. Put the holly and mistletoe into a dust sheet and carry it from room to room in this way.

The Christmas Dinner

Should be made a very festive occasion. Much amusement may be given by asking everyone to come in fancy-dress. This need not be elaborate, but much amusement will be caused if each keep his own counsel as to what character he intends to personate.

Christmas Table Decoration

Should be of holly as much as possible. Lay bands of scarlet satin ribbon crosswise on the table, then arrange the holly, taking care to cut away the leaves, which conceal the beauty of the berries. Mistletoe may be added, and sprays of ivy.

Late Hours.

If your little tots are invited out to a Christmas party and will not return until two or three hours later than their usual bedtime, see that they have a rest in the afternoon before going to the festivities. Even if they do not sleep they will have a valuable rest.

Crackers

Can be made at home. Have some brightly tinted papers. Cut into pieces three inches by four inches, and one end cut into fringe. Gum two pieces together so that there is a fringe at each end. Buy some "Waterloo crackers" from the toyshop and paste each end of one to the inside of the joined papers. Put a sugared almond or a nice hard sweet into each, tie the ends with gold thread, and the cracker is finished.

£

PAID

That is
National
of three
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We have
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ha

Cheques.	E. K.	Amount
7,383	"	12 0
9,050	"	22 7
9,169	"	15 0
9,432	"	13 5
9,670	"	18 15
10,195	"	20 0
11,180	"	17 5
12,940	"	36 10
13,535	"	16 5
13,957	"	16 0
1,373	"	15 15
1,556	"	15 1
1,887	"	26 0
2,104	"	17 0
2,285	"	66 1
2,419	"	22 0
2,758	"	55 1
		£405 1

We make frequent
profits for Clients,
of our

FILL IN
THIS FOR

£298,960

PAID to CLIENTS

That is the sum total paid to Clients by the National Share Exchange. Below are particulars of three accounts showing how Clients benefit individually. These are only given as examples. We have thousands of Clients who, starting with small amounts, which was the limit of their liability, have made profits in a similar way.

Cheques.	E. K.	Amount.		
		£	s.	d.
7,383	"	12	0	0
9,050	"	22	7	0
9,169	"	15	0	0
9,432	"	13	5	0
9,670	"	18	15	0
10,195	"	20	0	0
11,180	"	17	5	6
12,940	"	36	10	0
13,535	"	16	5	0
13,957	"	16	0	0
1,373	"	15	15	0
1,556	"	15	11	8
1,887	"	26	0	0
2,104	"	17	3	0
2,285	"	66	10	0
2,419	"	22	0	0
2,758	"	55	10	0
		<u>£405</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>2</u>

Cheques.	G. F.	Amount.		
		£	s.	d.
4,861	"	31	2	6
6,783	"	17	16	7
7,045	"	94	8	6
14,605	"	15	2	6
		<u>£158 10 1</u>		

Cheques.	J. H. W.	Amount.		
		£	s.	d.
7,763	"	25	0	0
9,123	"	11	0	0
10,452	"	19	12	6
11,573	"	34	10	3
Carried forward		<u>£90</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>

Cheques.	J. H. W.	Amount.		
		£	s.	d.
B'ght forward		£90	2	9
11,711	"	10	0	0
12,661	"	18	0	0
13,150	"	24	0	0
13,158	"	29	7	6
13,927	"	88	7	9
14,570	"	34	5	0
14,591	"	26	10	0
14,941	"	29	0	0
14,995	"	28	18	0
2,430	"	6	0	0
2,824	"	6	10	0
3,736	"	24	0	0
4,205	"	12	0	0
4,513	"	18	15	0
		<u>£445</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>0</u>

We make frequent and substantial profits for Clients, that is the secret of our success.

**FILL IN
THIS FORM.**



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Telegrams—"NATSHAREX," London.

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Please forward me particulars of how, starting with a few pounds, clients have made frequent profits, and a list of between 14,000 and 15,000 cheques, numbers to whom paid, amounts, etc.

NAME.....
(State Rev., Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Title.)

ADDRESS IN FULL.....

P. W.

(Please write distinctly.)

DATE.....

THE LAST LEAF

WHEN you meet an old friend and wish him a happy Christmas, half the pleasure of your greeting lies in the hearty handshake which you give one another. It's good to feel hand grip hand, for it's the warmest salutation that men can give each other. I speak, of course, of Britishers, for, as everybody knows, in other countries they sometimes kiss each other, sometimes rub noses, and do other queer things, but give me the hearty handshake of a true pal. I wish I could look into your homes and give you all that grip of the hand, you who live in England, and up in Scotland, and over in Ireland, and right away in our Colonies all over the world, too. But I'm afraid we're far too big a family for that to be possible, so I suppose I must content myself with wishing you all the happiest Christmas of your lives.

We in this office here have done our best to give you a good Christmas number. I hope, in your opinion, we have succeeded. With regard to the new serial, "The Oath of Silence," as I have mentioned elsewhere, it has the rather unusual distinction of being what I call a "human interest" story, and I am keenly anxious to know if you agree with me. As to Houghton Townley's new series, its very novelty is bound to appeal, for, as you can imagine, Rachel, in her search for evil-doers, gets into some queer scrapes. Next week you will hear of her adventure in a great matrimonial swindle. Then there is our new game. This really makes excellent fun, and if you care to make the race more exciting still, at a party, for instance, offer some small prize to the winner, and the success of your party will be assured. For a player may get nearly up to the Destination, then "The Elements" may be consistently against him, and the man who had given up all hope may find himself in front again.

If you want to send your Editor a really acceptable Christmas card, make it a postcard, telling me how you like this double number. You could not give me more genuine gratification.

I AM a British subject, and have been for some time in Berlin," writes B. S., who has been taking part in our Picture Couplets Competition. "My friends tell me it is no use competing for any of your prizes, as none are given out of the British Isles. Will you kindly inform me through your columns whether this is so?"

No, B. S., your friends are quite wrong in their assumption. There is nothing in the conditions of our Picture Couplets Competition which states that British subjects residing beyond the British Isles are disqualified. The only stipulation we make is that all entries must arrive by a certain date. As a matter of fact, residents abroad have before now won prizes.

I AM very sorry for WIDOWED MATER, for I think she has a real grievance. Here it is in her own words: "I do not know if you will consider the question 'Should Tuck-Shops be Abolished?' one of public interest. Being the widowed mother of

an eleven-year-old schoolboy, resident at one of our big public schools, I can assure you the question is one of 'financial' interest to me. It seems to me that the schoolboy of to-day is openly encouraged to both eat and spend too much by the presence of a tempting tuck-shop—and in most cases tea-room—in the school-grounds. The dangers of over-eating I can—after my boy's two years' residence at school—safely overlook! The fact that no ill effects followed 'a ripping tuck-out' (I am quoting the eater's letter) of sausages, a plate of hot currant tea-cake, three jam tarts, glass of milk, one jelly, one ice, and bottle of lemonade, prove to me that schoolboys' internal arrangements are evidently made specially for them. It is the financial side of the question which interests me. It is in many cases a great strain on one's purse to give the 'boys' the education they need nowadays, and to add to the necessary expenses a magnificent allowance for tuck makes it doubly hard. If a boy cannot do and spend as others do he has a hard battle to fight. Only in the summer term a boy of fourteen was expelled from the college where my little son is for stealing money from the masters' rooms. In one week that boy had spent between twenty and thirty shillings at the tuck-shop. Which proves what a really dangerous temptation there is for boys not having real strength of mind. I should like to know your opinion in the matter."

Of course, WIDOWED MATER, the case you quote is an extraordinary one, and I don't think it would be quite fair to deprive thousands of boys of their "tuck-shop" because one boy was too weak to resist the temptation of stealing money to spend there. Boyhood memories

last in the mind when more recent things fade away, and in my own happy schooldays the "tuck-shop" is one of the brightest and best-loved recollections. And I know it didn't take thirty shillings a week, nor thirty shillings a term to satisfy my boyish needs. Perhaps boys are more extravagant nowadays. There is a minimum on which a boy can be happy as well as a maximum, and if your little boy has any sound sense, and doubtless he has, a kindly statement of facts might do a heap of good.

In case any of my readers don't know what a lustrum is, I might mention that it represents a period of five years. It is the matter of a lustrum which is at present worrying out friend HYMEN. Here is his letter: "For the last four years I have been engaged to a young lady who is exactly five years my senior. The parents on both sides are strongly opposed to the match, and all because of this slight disparity in age. They admit that otherwise we are suited to each other in every way, but my own father and mother go so far as to threaten to disown me if I take my own course. What do you advise me to do?"

I think, speaking on broad lines, HYMEN, that it is a mistake to marry a woman older than oneself. There are, of course, many exceptions to such a sweeping rule. One of the happiest unions I know is that of a young friend of mine, who married a lady thirteen years older than himself. Beyond the fact that he is occasionally mistaken for her son, nothing ever seems to mar the harmony of their lives. With regard to your own case, it really seems to me one in which it would be unwise to give you too definite advice. It is surely a matter which you can decide better for yourself. If you are unable to bring your parents to a more reasonable frame of mind, it looks as if you would have to choose between being disowned and remaining a bachelor. It is purely a matter of taste as to which is the most distressful catastrophe.

HERE is a novel suggestion from a gentleman who signs himself, "ABSENT INVIDIA." "Don't you think it time," he asks, "that a working man should be honoured in the King's Birthday List? Isn't a man who successfully negotiates life's difficulties on a pound a week, raises up a healthy family ten or twelve strong, and contributes sons to the Army and Navy, just as deserving as the discoverer of an exaggerated icicle or one who gives to charities the money he can't spend himself?"

I should say he was quite as deserving, A. I., but he is also much more common. If one started honouring everybody who has a pound a week and ten children, the House of Lords would be so crammed that we should never be able to get a bill inside it. On the other hand, it would be unfair to pick out just one or two specimen individuals.

Besides, I doubt if they would enjoy it if one did. Fancy how Alf Higgins, the motor-bus driver, would be chaffed if he were suddenly raised to the Peerage under the title of the Earl of Tooting! It would be so trying to have to say: "Would you mind stopping, a moment, your lordship?" every time one wanted to catch the bus.

"WILL you please tell me the difference between poetry and verse?" writes C. S. "I have a friend who is constantly sending me verses on different subjects, and asking for my opinion, and I should like to know just what constitutes poetry?"

I am worse off than you, C. S., I have innumerable friends who are constantly sending me verses on different subjects, and asking for my cheques. It would be a difficult matter to define exactly the difference between verse and poetry. Of course, when you come across four lines like:

*When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead,
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.*

You may safely assign them to the realms of poetry because the idea is more or less poetic. Should the idea, on the other hand, be expressed in some such words as:

*When you kick a lamp glass
It leaves you in the dark;
Sunshine on the damp grass
Means a coloured arc.*

You may, with equal confidence, write it down as verse. The fact is that poetry stands in relation to verse much as the music of Beethoven or Chopin does to the pretty little tunes which capture the popular fancy. A large number of people can write nicely turned, graceful verses, but a real poet only appears two or three times in a generation.

I HAVE received a copy of "The Rapid Rhymester"—a little book which should prove of great use to those who compete in the various rhyming competitions now so popular. It contains a large number of rhyming words, together with hints on how to compose good last lines. Competitors will find it most useful.

B. G. WANTS to know if I have heard of the quaint superstition known as "Telling the Bees." "My wife's uncle," he says, "lost his mother by death some years ago. After the funeral was over the assembly of relatives reminded him that he would have to go and tell the bees (of which he had several hives) of the death. He went to each hive in turn, and said: 'Bees, mother is dead.' He declares that if he had not done so the bees would have flown away. This is supposed actually to have happened in a village called Terriers, situated near High Wycombe. On making further inquiries in this neighbourhood, I find that in times gone by it was the custom, on a death in the family, to place a piece of black crape round the entrance to the hive."

I have heard of both superstitions before, B. G., but I had no idea people still believed in them. The origin, no doubt, lies in the sudden swarming of bees. Taking place, as it might, just after a funeral, the two events would, no doubt, be connected by credulous people, who would imagine that the bees were offended at not having been taken into the family confidence.

There is another old custom known as "tanging the bees," which is equally ineffective. The owner, when they swarmed, used to beat on an old frying-pan, under the belief that this would prevent them from leaving the garden.

"WHEN in Guatemala City last year," writes S. E. T., "I was told that one of the political prisoners had lately been subjected to a flogging of 300 lashes of a whip on his bare back. When he lost consciousness he was revived in order that he might receive the full number. Do you think any man could outlive such a severe punishment? If not, what is the greatest number of lashes that he could receive and yet live?"

It is, of course, impossible to say who holds the unenviable record in this respect, S. E. T., but there are several extraordinary feats of endurance attested to by eyewitnesses. One was the case of an Irish sailor, who, about 150 years ago, underwent the cheerful experience of being "flogged round the fleet." He is stated to have received in all 540 lashes, and to have lived thirty years after.

There is rather an amusing story told in connection with flogging in the Army. Two well-known brothers, who were both officers in one of the Irish regiments in the early fifties, had a dispute as to which of them could take punishment best. They finally each agreed to receive 40 lashes from the sergeant-major, the one who bore it with the greatest stoicism to win £100 from the other. The elder brother first bared his back, and received the full number without so much as a groan. The younger then declared gravely that he was fully satisfied his brother was the braver of the two, and paid over the £100.

PICTURE COUPLETS WINNERS.

(Continued from page 475.)

In Picture Couplets No. 10, which competitors were asked to complete, the line given was:

*When Brown in an aeroplane thought he would fly.
The ten lines selected by the adjudicators as the best, together with the names and addresses of the senders, are as follows:*

*He cried: 'Farman's not in it!' 'He's lucky,' said I.
A. J. GREEN, 58 Cromwell Ave., Manley Park, Manchester.
"You have me to 'fall back on,'" said Mother Earth, "try!"
ARCHD. MUIR, Brandon Chambers, Hamilton.
"You gave me a turn!" cried a windmill close by.
JOHN RICE, 30 Caldicot Road, Coldharbour Lane, S.E.
"Wrong 'design!' 'Copy (W)right!'" cried a wag standing by.*

*MISS C. WAGSTAFF, 4 Manor Road, Richmond, Surrey.
His widow now lives "bi-plane" sewing. Oh, my!
N. P. DE HEVENINGHAM, Trull, Taunton.
His "motive" was good, but his "power" ran dry.
W. J. COLTIER, 159 Finborough Road, Earl's Court.
He "got off the earth"—with a clothes-brush, when dry.
W. E. MEAD, 44 Magdalen Street, Exeter.
As a milkman he knew how to skim, by the bye.
MRS. L. CORBETT, 4 Royal Terrace, Kingstown, Ireland.
Said his wife, "Bring the moon for the baby; good-bye."
T. F. WALTON, Maes Talaran, Dolgelly, N. Wales.
"What large wing," said the crowd. 'Twas Brown's feet, by the bye.*

EDWIN C. BARWELL, 36 Woolwich Road, Greenwich.

(List of other awards appears on p. iii. of Red Cover.)

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NOT A CHRISTMAS PUDDING!

The XMAS PEARSON'S

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Features

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contributes a thrilling detective tangle, entitled "The Indiscretion of Letty Shaw."

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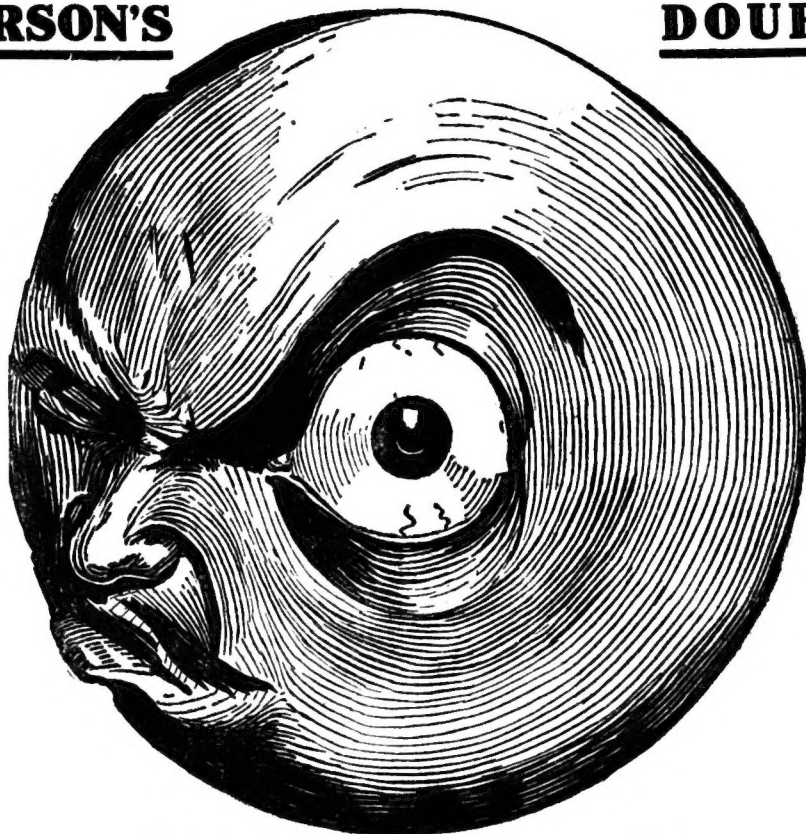
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Christmas Day December 25.	M 5 12 19 26	M 2 9 16 23 30	M 6 13 20 27	M 6 13 20 27	M 3 10 17 24	Dec. 3 ... 4-53
Boxing Day December 26.	M 6 13 20 27	M 3 10 17 24 31	M 7 14 21 28	M 7 14 21 28	M 4 11 18 25	" 4 ... 4-52
Good Friday March 25th.	T 7 14 21 28	T 4 11 18 25	T 8 15 22	T 8 15 22 29	T 5 12 19 26	" 5 ... 4-51
Easter Monday March 28th.	W 1 8 15 22 29	W 5 12 19 26	W 9 16 23	W 9 16 23 30	W 6 13 20 27	" 6 ... 4-51
Whitsun Monday May 16th.	T 2 9 16 23 30	T 6 13 20 27	T 3 10 17 24	T 3 10 17 24 31	T 7 14 21 28	" 7 ... 4-50
	F 3 10 17 24 31	F 7 14 21 28	F 4 11 18 25	F 4 11 18 25	F 8 15 22 29	" 8 ... 4-50
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